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COMMONWEAL

"In the Jewish community, the Catholic-Jewish dialogue has taken ten steps backward."
LEON KLENICKI

"It has in the Catholic community too. There is a good deal of anger in the Roman Catholic community."
ELIAS MALLON
page 521

"I pursued a career of professional drinking. It was my only resounding success, vocationally speaking."
SEAN CALLERY, page 519

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CORRESPONDENCE

One Giant error

Rye, N.Y.

To the Editors: As a loyal New York Giant fan (baseball) I should point out the factual error in Paul Baumann's book review in the August 11 issue: "Williams—the only man since 1925 to bat over .400 (in 1941)—was a much-savored childhood hero."

All loyal New York Giant fans know that Bill Terry, "Memphis Bill" of the New York Giants, hit .401 in 1930 (*Baseball Encyclopedia*, Macmillan). Mr. Terry was an outstanding ball player. He was the best first baseman in the National League during his era, his lifetime batting average over 14 seasons was .341, and he is a member of Baseball's Hall of Fame.

In 1957 the New York National League franchise was transferred to a city somewhere in the western part of the United States. The franchise was transferred, but clearly affection for the team endures.

JAMES A. SHEA

The author replies:

My apologies to Memphis Bill; my thanks to Mr. Shea. I guess my own batting average just went down a point.

PAUL BAUMANN

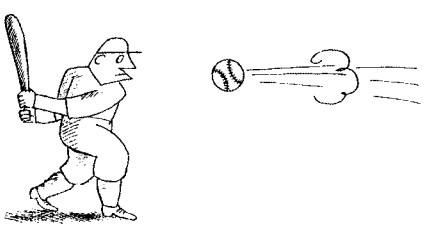
Icons on film

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: I agree with an observation Tom O'Brien made in his review of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* [July 14]: when indeed, except in *The Last Temptation*, have film audiences of the last two decades heard that anything associated with Jesus Christ "stands for the divine in all of us"? But what for Mr. O'Brien merely "involves no sacrilege" in the film's pursuit of the Holy Grail theme, for many others may have amounted to a first exposure (and perhaps a very meaningful one) to the metaphor of the spiritual journey within the Christian context.

I saw the film at a matinee in northern Virginia as part of a packed, ethnically-diverse audience that included families, young adults, and senior citizens. In the course of the film, as the virtues and power of the Cup of Christ are made manifest to Jones and to the audience, an eight-year-old boy behind me sought explanation from his father. "Well," his father whispered, "it's like...it's like The Force."

Most of us who read Mr. O'Brien's fine column were [taught] a concept of Holy Spirit for which George Lucas's "Force" was obviously a kind of pop-science-fiction correlative. Conversely, it seems that



the boy behind me, and I daresay many like him schooled in the icon and lore of secular culture, are forced to extrapolate Christian story and meaning from the prior catechesis of *Star Wars* and other imaginatively-argued cosmologies like *Dungeons and Dragons*. That two prime movers of these cosmologies, in this instance Lucas and Spielberg, are themselves exploring (or rediscovering?) wider theological coordinates for their favorite theme of the Hero's Quest strikes me as having far more going for it than the mere absence of sacrilege. I am almost inclined to say it is a cause for celebration.

DAVID IMPASTATO

Flowers & fanfare

Marietta, Ga.

To the Editors: How I love *Commonweal*, and how I long to get this excellent publication into the hands of the upper-class parishioners where I do ministry in adult education. The unshaping of the American mind and heart through abject neglect of good reading is frightening to me. Thank you for your consistency in producing a fine publication.

Special thanks to Paul Baumann for his keen analysis of the works of Catholic writer Thomas Keneally [July 14]. The series on Catholic fiction authors is great. More!

MARY ANN FISCHER

George's story

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Having recently been an AIDS "buddy" for another person named George, I was especially moved by "George's story" [September 8].

I often think that many of us speak and act as if God in Christ came down from heaven to become the Blessed Sacrament and not human flesh, or if God did become flesh, that can mean only nice, white, clean, heterosexual flesh.

Theoretically, when one takes the hand of not only a victim of AIDS but of any victim of poverty or oppression, one is taking the hand of Christ in that person. I don't think many of us actually believe that is so. We just give lip service to the idea.

I have a recurring dream: God has announced that Jesus will be coming again

(Continued on page 541)

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COMMONWEAL

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The phony war

Does anyone believe that this nation is at war against drugs? Police officers, social workers, convicted drug sellers, doctors, and people on the streets express the same doubts as the crack-addicted prostitute from the Bronx, who said of the president's approach to drug abuse: "He can't take it away. It's all over the place....There's so much money in it."

At its political best, the president's first nationally televised speech—with its touching true story about the crack-house world of six-year-old Dooney and with its dollop of empathy for the poor—is a nice try.

At its real-world worst, Bush's "comprehensive," four-pronged strategy is so imbalanced and grossly underfunded that it leaves the nation in doubt as to the president's competence and seriousness.

Mr. Bush rightly puts money launderers in the same verminous class with drug lords, pushers, and addicts, but his plan doesn't really restrict or control the dollars now flowing to dealers and growers. He offers money for prisons, courts, and law enforcement, but the emphasis on punishment misses the heart of the "demand" problem: why do so many Americans abuse drugs?

Declaring a war is not to be confused with waging one. Most citizens know that in a nation truly at war, the war gets the full attention and support of its president. President Bush proposes an $8 billion drug budget for 1990. That's a record, but it's a pittance when compared with the recent $100 billion savings and loan bailout. And, of that total, he is asking only $716 million in new money to combat drugs.

What does that large-sounding sum amount to in human terms?

Columnist Pete Hamill, who called the Bush plan a "ghastly joke...on us," has calculated that the additional money proposed for national drug education would amount to only $37 per student per year—if every cent of it were spent in New York City alone.

Not only are drug-related deaths, violence, crimes, and diseases on the increase across the U.S., but the number of infants born addicted is rising with frightening rapidity. Mr. Bush's punitive proposals won't help them. His treatment allocations won't cover their needs.

Some 300,000 infants are born each year with traces of illegal drugs in their blood. Recent studies show that crack is especially harmful. For years after detoxification, a child born of a mother addicted to crack bears signs of serious emotional underdevelopment—an inability to concentrate and relate to other people—similar to mild autism.

Within the next year or two, hundreds of thousands of such children will walk through the doors of the first grade. What help will they need in order to learn? Can the schools provide it? Soon we will be compelled to tabulate what drug-induced

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handicaps like these cost in terms of lost labor and civic participation, social dislocation, and hard dollars. The total promises to be staggering.

Most of us recognize that the drug industry is already warring against us and our society, and it is winning. We in the U.S. are experiencing what Colombian journalist Maria Jimena Duzan has said of her own country: "Everything is upside down. We are the targets, instead of the drug traffickers."

Can the U.S. fight a war on drugs and win? Is there any way—short of capitulating to the increasing pressures for legalization of cocaine, heroin, and (you name it!)—for us to reclaim addicts?

We think there is. But we need a president willing to lead a genuine effort and a citizenry ready to do some soul-searching. Mr. Bush could begin by thinking enough of his "war" to finance the battle plans. He also needs to look deeper at the problems of communities hardest hit by drugs—and everything else: poverty, homelessness, illiteracy, and an undereducated, unskilled labor force.

Drug education—including health information and moral common sense—is vital to prevention. But it is families and communities that provide the context for a child's attitudes toward self and toward others. Drug-addicted parents, drug-infested schools, and drug-drenched neighborhoods create a negative context that must be redressed by those who live there, by schools and churches, and by the government.

Preventive drug education means an effective appeal to young people. Yet when one child in five lives in poverty, how can he or she be expected to develop a sound sense of right and wrong, a sense of personal priorities and long-term goals, when it is so clear that the very government declaring zero tolerance for drugs has a high tolerance for homelessness and destitution? This same credibility test applies to churches, schools, and community groups.

Some three million Americans are homeless. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 10 percent of them abuse drugs and/or alcohol. It's the problem of the chicken and the egg: which comes first? Addiction, job loss, crime, and inability to live at home and to pay the rent? Or the reverse: loss of a job, loss of a home, then addiction? Does it matter? Hundreds of thousands of homeless, drug-addicted adults need expensive, prolonged, live-in treatment. While government cannot change the will of individuals bent on self-destruction, it can offer, and at times mandate, treatment for the many who long to be free of their craving.

Of Bush's new drug money $322 million is set aside for treatment. If the entire sum were spent on the 1.2 million Americans already addicted, but who can't now get help, the plan would allot $268 per addict per year. Nonprofit Day Top Village in New York charges $30 a day—that's $10,000 a year—for those able to pay. The meager Bush figure assumes existing treatment centers have the space and staff to handle a huge new influx without additional aid. They don't.

Too many Americans, willing to work, are no longer able to find unskilled jobs at living wages. Whatever its drawbacks, pushing drugs provides employment and is a rational occupational choice for poor youth. The federal government could provide alternatives by creating public works jobs, modeled on the successful Job Corps, and entice private industry to invest in skills training. True, entry-level jobs cannot provide the luxuries flaunted by drug dealers making thousands of dollars a week. Still, legitimate work offers its own satisfactions, forms of self-esteem and social relationships, that are attractive compared to the daily threat of danger, imprisonment, and death that stalks the drug subculture. The satisfactions of daily work are learned only by experience.

The illicit drug industry feeds upon economic inequities in the U.S., in Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. That should rouse the government both to rectify such inequities here and to assist the coca-producing governments with their own drug wars. Bush's plan offers token foreign aid, but does nothing to help farmers move away from coca production.

An infusion of federal money wisely allocated can effect substantial change. During the Johnson administration an authentic, though not fully adequate, war on poverty, was waged. As a result the well-being of our nation's youngest and oldest citizens improved. The war on poverty, waged by a controversial president, was a real war, partially won. Today, an immensely popular George Bush faces a more intractable enemy. So far his efforts look like a skirmish, not a war, on drugs.

A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

In early August, Nicaragua's Sandinista government and twenty opposition parties reached an accord aimed at bringing about free and fair elections in the country next February 25. The accord provides access to the media for all parties, ends the military draft from September until after the election, and underwrites a new campaign finance law. That law will divide equally—among all parties or coalitions fielding candidates—half of the public funds collected to pay for electoral campaigns; the other half will be divided according to the proportion of the vote a party received in the previous election. The accord also invites international observers to monitor the election campaign, and even allows for foreign money to be donated to participating parties as long as it is done through official channels. (Half of the money collected this way will go directly to the party stipulated, while the other half will be placed in a general fund set up to cover election costs.) Nicaragua is the only country in Central America to allow such foreign funding in its elections. (U.S. law expressly forbids contributions to U.S. elections from abroad.) Evidently, Nicaragua concluded the U.S. would try to influence the vote and decided it was in Nicaragua's best interest to make that support as overt as possible.

In September, Nicaragua's fractious opposition parties put Humpty-Dumpty together by nominating a single candidate for president, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, and choosing Virgilio Godoy Reyes as its vice-presidential candidate.

In June, however, Vice-President Dan Quayle had set the tone

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for the Bush administration by labeling the upcoming election a "sham." And until recently the administration seemed to be working to make his prediction come true. It proposed to finance the opposition's campaign with U.S. dollars through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a nongovernmental institution funded by the U.S. Congress to promote democratic institutions. The NED has distributed $110 million over five years to more than forty countries. But it is specifically forbidden to contribute money for partisan politicking. The Bush proposal would have required a legislative waiver.

Fortunately, saner heads prevailed. Under pressure from Congress last month, the administration scrapped its plan to use the NED to fund particular parties in Nicaragua. Instead, it now proposes to funnel campaign funds through the U.S. Agency for International Development, and in doing so to adhere to the stipulations of Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council.

Nobody, including the Sandinistas, quarrels with the view that the February election must be closely monitored. The conduct of the election will prove as important as its outcome. As President Jimmy Carter has said, if he and other observers can certify in February that the election had been honest and fair throughout, then the successful candidates will be the legitimate leaders of Nicaragua, and "this would almost ensure...an improvement in relations between the U.S. and Nicaragua." That's an objective we could all vote for.

ET CETERA

THERE IS A BALM IN... David Dinkins is not yet mayor of New York, and may never be. Nonetheless, it's permissible to take nonpartisan pleasure in Dinkins's victory in the Democratic primary on September 12. A majority of New York Democrats decided that Dinkins's demeanor, mingling strength with gentleness, and his reconciling message might bring balm to a city that prides itself on being cosmopolitan and tolerant, though often enough it fails those values when it comes to race, class, and ethnicity. Much has been made of the white vote for Dinkins; he got 30 percent. But black New York Democrats, who too often have given up on electoral politics, also went to the polls in large numbers encouraged by the unprecedented unity of black political leaders.

Some of the balm is already working, to judge by this exchange between a black cab driver and his white passenger: Driver: "I can't believe all of those whites voted for Dinkins." Passenger: "Just remember, we're not all bad."

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS A report just published by the National Catholic Educational Association comparing reading achievement in Catholic and public schools concludes that at the third, seventh, and eleventh grade levels, Catholic school students are better readers than their public school counterparts. Furthermore, there is less of a disparity between the reading achievement of white and minority students than in the public schools.

The report, "National Assessment of Educational Progress Proficiency in Reading: 1985–1986," emphasizes the strengths that contribute to Catholic schools students' achievements and that could be applied to other systems. Catholic schools stress academic courses, require more homework, and have higher expectations of their students. While they offer fewer curricular choices than the public schools, they provide a strong environment "which encourages students of all social backgrounds to pursue an academic program of study...."

It is these higher expectations that seem to challenge and stimulate the students.

THE ANSWER IS We're told that a contestant on the September 19 telecast of "Jeopardy," the ABC quiz show, was asked to identify "a biweekly Catholic magazine whose title means the common good," and gave the right answer. But who was the contestant? And how did he know?

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

A TRAGEDY WITHOUT VILLAINS

THE POLITICAL BATTLE OVER ABORTION

Hegel, whose philosophy constitutes a kind of extraordinarily long epic poem in celebration of conflict, says somewhere that tragedy is not the result of a struggle between good and evil; rather, it is the issue of a struggle between two goods. Isaiah Berlin, an anti-Hegelian if ever there was one, says something very similar when he argues that it is not possible to maximize all good things, since many goods are incompatible with other goods; one must choose among goods, and in choosing A one bids farewell to B, C, etc.

The political battle over abortion in the U.S. is one of these Hegelian tragedies. Both sets of antagonists—the prochoice people and the prolife folks—are (at least within the limits imposed by original sin) decent people with honest motives. Neither side, despite accusations sometimes made by its opponent, is fighting with the intention of making some great evil prevail in the world. Quite the contrary, each side is fighting to defend a great and genuine value. No one, after all, can doubt that freedom of choice is a great good; nor can anyone doubt that human life is a great good. Yet neither side can prevail without causing great damage to what the other considers a supremely important good. In the eyes of prochoice people,

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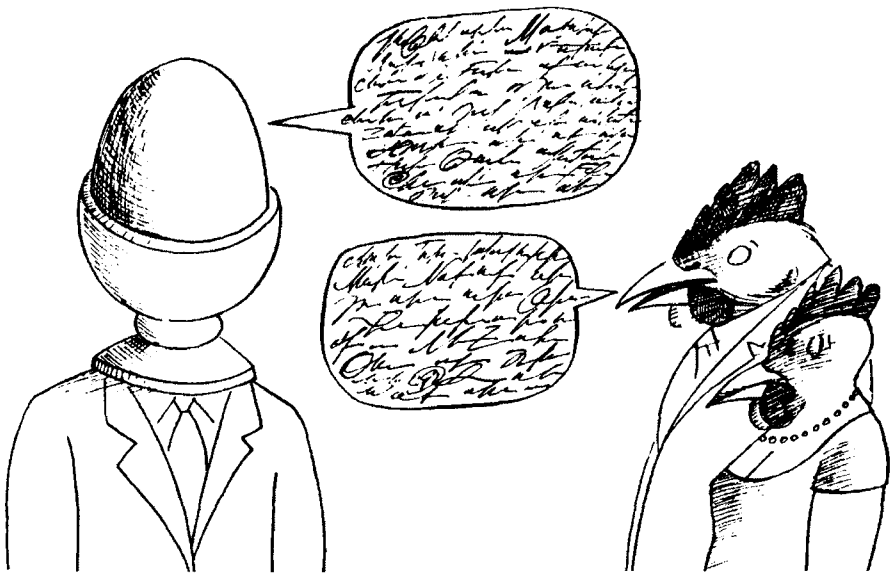

freedom suffers a serious blow if prolifers win; while in the eyes of the latter, human lives continue to be snuffed out in vast numbers so long as *Roe* v. *Wade*, the prochoice Magna Charta, continues to be the law of the land.

Hegel, however, also explained that there is a way out of a tragic conflict. Find some more comprehensive good in which both the conflicting goods are reconciled in a higher synthesis. In the case at hand, find a solution that surpasses yet preserves the essential truth of both the prolife and prochoice positions. Then, like the lion and the lamb, the prochoicers and prolifers can lie down together in peace, while the rest of the world goes on to involve itself in some other tragic conflict.

The trouble with these higher-synthesis solutions is that the synthesis in question never comes about today, when you need it. It only comes about in the long run, after the great battles have been fought and the battlefields have been strewn with corpses—which retrospective logic proves to have been unnecessary but which history insists on, as a kind of tuition price the human race must pay to gain its difficult logical insights. In other words, don't expect a Hegelian solution to the abortion conflict in the near future.

How great a value is freedom? Is it the supreme value, or is it one value among many? If supreme, then the prochoice party deserves to prevail, since it makes no sense to limit the supreme value. But if it is only one value among many, then from time to time it will have to give place to other values, among them, perhaps, the life of a fetus.

Again, do all values travel on their own two feet, or do some ride on the shoulders of other values? Are some values, that is, more fundamental than others? If so, then it makes no sense to promote derivative values at the expense of more fundamental values upon which the former depend; it makes no sense to destroy the foundation for the great glory of the superstructure.

I confess that while I am in general more sympathetic to the prolife than to the prochoice party, my prolife sensibilities are deficient. That is, while I tend to *think* in a more or less prolife way, I don't tend to *feel* that way. I do not react to dead fetuses the way I react to dead children. If I learn that the child of someone I know has died, I am shocked, appalled; my belief in the fundamental goodness of reality wobbles, nearly falls over. But when I learn that someone I know (a student, for instance) has had an abortion, I have little or no emotional reaction. Certainly I do not react the way I would to the death of a child; nor do I react the way I would to a homicide, even an unwitting one. I neither condemn the young woman in question, nor feel any strong compassion for her. I suppose my reaction to her is that she, like so many others who buy the prochoice argument, is involved in a fallacy rather than a crime or a catastrophe; but since fallacies are so common, especially among students, there is no reason to get worked up about all this; if I were to get upset about every fallacy a student falls into I would never get a good night's sleep.

But despite my inability to develop a proper prolife sensibility, I cannot bring myself to enter the prochoice camp. For I cannot persuade myself that freedom is the supreme value or that it is more fundamentally important than the value of the human person; and I fear that some such belief is entailed by the prochoice position.

Personhood is the more fundamental of the two values. And it is only because humanity, after a painful struggle of many centuries (the kind of struggle Hegel delighted in describing), has come to have a more or less adequate understanding of the dignity of the human person that we also understand that freedom is a universal value. There was perhaps never a time in human history when freedom was not valued—freedom for the king, for the nobles, for the slave owners, for our fellow citizens, etc.—but always freedom for some limited group. But the fact that freedom is a *universal* good—that it should belong to all humans, regardless of race, sex, social class, and so forth—this is an insight that could not be arrived at until we had arrived at the prior insight that the personhood which belongs to all human beings is something of infinite value.

Personhood, then, is the foundation of freedom; and if we undermine the value of the person in the name of freedom, we shall find in the long run that we have undermined freedom itself. I fear that something like this is taking place today with regard to abortion. It is not that the prochoice party advocates the killing of entities which it believes to be persons; but it seems strangely at ease about the killing, in the name of freedom, of millions of entities which it believes *may* be persons or which it believes are on the way to *becoming* persons. At best, this is a cavalier attitude to take with regard to the value of personhood. At worst, it is a reckless attitude for the lover of freedom to take with regard to the foundation of freedom. □

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THE CLAY MOVES AWRY...

AND DEMON HORDES ARE BORN

SEAN CALLERY

A woman stands at the subway entrance near my office in Manhattan every day. She holds a sign written in black on soiled brown cardboard: "Help Me Feed My Children Today." Children surround the woman. They stare up at the peaks of uncompleted skyscrapers and are silent, excepting a soft "thank you" as a coin falls into a cup at the woman's feet.

Memories of long ago assail me each time I see that sad brood. In Dublin, just after World War II, a few American students were coping with more difficult living conditions than they expected. There was a great deal of wet snow, for Ireland, and no central heating in frigid houses. There was no coal for room grates and the turf, usually reserved for farmhouse kitchens, was still damp from an overly moist summer. Landladies fussed over wet rectangles cut from peat bogs. Sometimes they lit up for a few moments and quickly died out. The process would begin all over again.

When students entered a tiered classroom, they encountered ascending rows of young people barely visible behind the clouds of steam their warm breaths created in the morning cold and dampness. The monotony of the food available to spoiled, gluttonous Yanks was another disappointment. The locals explained the unpleasant taste of the ubiquitous potato. Potatoes had been frozen in the earth, altering their flavor. They were devoured anyway.

One event best describes the state of the national larder. There were no onions in the shops for many months. Then a freighter arrived from Egypt with a cargo of the fondly remembered staple. It was headline news, replete with pictures of bales of onions being unloaded at Ringsend.

I had lately seen a few of Europe's ruined cities and been fought over by emaciated rickshaw drivers in Calcutta. But I was a mere witness to desolation and returned nightly to a merchant ship and my officer's billet. It was bleak by American standards but palatial compared to the city beyond the gates that always surrounded the docks.

A year later, I was in Ireland. With the odious attitudes of youth, I imagined I was suffering real deprivation. We Americans endured cold, damp feet and hands all day long. Bed linen was frigid, partially ameliorated by hot water bottles, called "Irish pigs," that lost their warmth long before morning. We lived on large brown buns, bacon, sausages, Brussels sprouts, odd tasting potatoes, and cups and more cups of peculiarly excellent tea.

In reality, we were only less comfortable than we had been in Brooklyn, Wilkes-Barre, and Upper Snowbank.

The term "ugly American" was not yet coined. We were still liberators and benefactors—to ourselves anyway. Europe was in ashes, but so was Hitler, and our country had done a great deal to put him there. When we grew up, perhaps in another decade or two, we could turn our attention to straightening out the world. The far reaches of that conceit embraced the barbarous East. We had suffered with dear Bette Davis as a Somerset Maugham heroine in mortal combat with some wily Malay States Orientals. A thousand of the brothers Warner's violins and brass resonated on the sound track, all but drowning out the histrionic excesses of Miss Davis. She and dozens of mustachioed Empire types from central casting shouldered the white man's burden in many a lurid melodrama. The films were an education of sorts.

When Europe recovered, under Uncle Sam's tutelage, we could turn our attention to the renovation of Asia. None could imagine what havoc those attitudes, translated into foreign policy, would bring about during our lifetimes.

Most of my activity in those days was play acting and looking for more of the same. One evening stands out in my memory. The late, great Ria Mooney was rehearsing William Butler Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* in a frigid loft somewhere behind the long since demolished Theater Royal. Ria had played some of the Sean O'Casey ladies in their very first performance at the Abbey Theater. Rehearsing Yeats, she would comment on ill-advised revisions the poet had made and restore the original text. Her familiarity, not only with the works themselves, but with the fabled writers, was dazzling.

SEAN CALLERY *is a long-time contributor to* Commonweal *and has written many articles and reviews for* Time, Saturday Review, *and the* New York Times Magazine. *He has recently completed a novel entitled,* One Eyed Reilly.

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For the tawdry reasons mentioned earlier in this little piece, I thought I understood Yeats's lovely play—understood as a good actor must, in his guts.

Countess Cathleen is a metaphor for Ireland, a spokeswoman for what our prosaic chief executive might call a "kinder, gentler" world. In the play, merchants are buying souls in a time of famine. The peasants are given a choice: sell your souls for food or starve to death. The tempters boast they are agents of the "Master of all merchants."

The countess is rich. She gives away her fortune and sells her own soul to set free the souls the evil merchants have bought. At one point in the play there is this exchange:

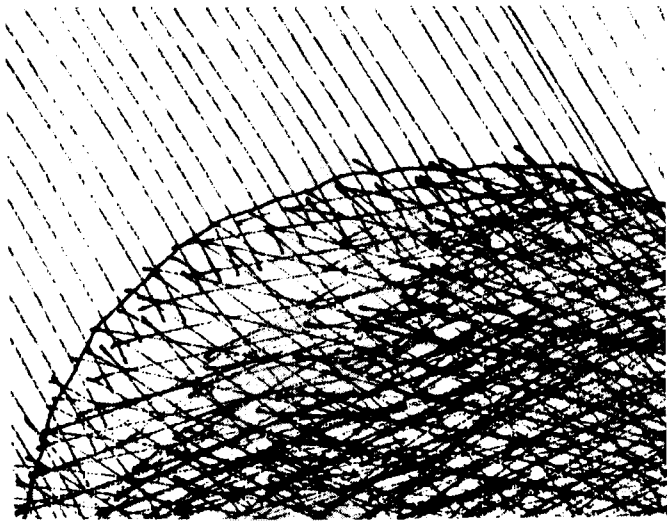
> OLD PEASANT: God forsakes us.
>
> CATHLEEN: Old man, old man, He never closed a door
> Unless one opened. I am desolate
> Because of a strange thought that's in my heart;
> But I still have my faith; therefore be silent;
> For surely He does not forsake the world,
> But stands before it modeling in the clay
> And molding there His image. Age by age
> The clay wars with His fingers and pleads hard
> For its old, heavy, dull and shapeless ease;
> But sometimes—though His hand is on it still—
> It moves awry and demon hordes are born.

Many years later, bits of the play's text haunted me and I certainly understood it better. For two decades or more I had pursued a career of professional drinking. It was my only resounding success, vocationally speaking. But the difficulties surrounding that calling at last did me in.

I had alienated friends and family, actual and potential employers—all but the marginal people as fond of the grape as I was. My home was in a crumbling tenement at the western frontier of Greenwich Village. The door to my digs was padlocked and there was another padlock arrangement on the inside of the door. An upended metal coffin perched on stilts in the kitchen—a shower. A rent strike was in progress and a bright banner hanging from my fire escape read, "*Venceremos*"—we will win.

I was plainly an unwelcome intruder gauged by the standards of that habitat. Most of its denizens were openly on narcotics and the presence of a common drunk diluted its chic. The building's complement included royalty. On fine days an elderly gentleman was borne in an armchair from one of the apartments to the sidewalk. The accompanying pomp recalled newsreels I saw in childhood of Pope Pius XII's being carried around St. Peter's square in the *sedia gestatoria*.

From his sidewalk throne, our king glared at passersby and at me and one other tenant in particular. With the true drinker's unerring instinct, I had located a fellow traveler. The lady's name was Jill; she hailed from someplace in County Galway. Together we defied His Majesty's disapproval, ignored the drug pushers, and quite often spent the evenings drinking anything



we could get our hands on.

It came to an end. I was about to be evicted and was totally without funds. I had become unemployable. After a disastrous interlude cutting fabrics in a way that sent a supervisor into the streets screaming, the temporary agency banished me from its employment rolls. I was alone and without influential or interested friends. My wife had lost the battle of the bottle and plummeted into an early grave. My brains were awash in the wake of a twenty-year alcoholic binge.

The blood banks required a waiting period before they would buy a pint for five dollars, a cup of coffee, and a doughnut. My last sale to them was too recent for me to climb up those rickety stairs in the midst of Times Square squalor. I had miscalculated once and been told to return in a few days.

No rejection had ever been, or would ever be, so humiliating as being told they didn't want to buy my blood.

I walked through an autumn downpour to a welfare center. The many years separating me from that afternoon have blurred the memory. Numbness and fear, as well as the drink, diminished my powers of observation. I remember a man on a landing shouting down at a mass of us huddled below. He called us cowardly swine, willing victims, worthless human beings, and threatened to hurl himself down into our midst.

A social worker screamed at a frightened woman: "You were supposed to have these papers notarized. Don't you understand English?" The woman's gestures and monosyllables suggested she did not understand English. The harangue continued: "Don't you understand English? I'm talking to you in plain English."

I went from desk to desk and floor to floor, at one point sharing a bench with a young woman with an infant in her arms. A man repeatedly approached her, shouting as he drank from a large wine bottle. He was subdued and led away eventually, but not before he urinated on the floor, broke his bottle on the radiator, and lunged at the woman and her baby.

After many short exchanges with officials, I was at last interrogated by a lady with rimless glasses and a commanding West Indian accent. She was condescending and contemptuous

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by turns until she found an old pay stub among my papers indicating I had once worked for a very important and famous government official. She became obsequious. "You've had real responsibility," she shouted, glaring at some waiting applicants, "You're not like these others." Clearly she had more respect for people who had destroyed their own productive lives than for the many who never had a chance.

An educated accent, vocabulary, and white skin elicited a measurably different response from the personnel at the welfare center. I was a member of an elite after a long period of being at the bottom of the social scale. Somewhere along the line, I was interviewed by a psychiatrist whose hands shook more than those of a hungover alcoholic before the morning's first drink. He told me that "people like you" are rare here. I felt more of a failure than ever. There were fewer mitigating circumstances to explain my dereliction.

That long day ended after a number of interviews with persons who stared long and hard at computer screens and shuffled through the many papers accumulated during the day. If memory serves, it ended when a photographer pasted my picture to an identification card. I was given a subway token and a small check for the immediate purchase of food. I thought about *The Countess Cathleen* and Dublin. I played Aleel, a poet who wanders through the forest mad from hunger and watching others die of starvation. I remembered a scene between my character and the merchant.

FIRST MERCHANT: Come, deal, deal, deal. It is but for charity
We buy such souls at all; a thousand sins
Made them our Master's long before we came.

ALEEL: Here, take my soul, for I am tired of it.
I do not ask a price.

I walked back to the village in the continuing downpour. The subway token was, after all, negotiable. I surely understood the play better than I did those many years before in that Dublin loft.

Many more years have passed and my mode of living is different. I go to an office and pass the woman and her children. She holds the sign "Help Me Feed My Children Today." They are mute and avoid looking directly at the passersby.

And demon hordes are born. □

CLOSE ENOUGH TO STEP ON TOES

TENSIONS BETWEEN JEWS & CATHOLICS

LEON KLENICKI
ELIAS MALLON

Rabbi Leon Klenicki and the Reverend Elias Mallon are veterans of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. Their concern over the Auschwitz convent controversy brought them together to discuss the present state of Jewish-Catholic relations in the United States and abroad. They met on Monday, September 11; their taped conversation was cut and edited by *Commonweal*.

LEON KLENICKI Perhaps the U.S. is the only country where Vatican II has been deeply developed in relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people. In other countries, there has been a certain development, but it is not the same. It is on a more academic level because there is no Jewish presence. What also concerns me is that we have never had a better relationship while at the same time we have never faced so many dangers.

ELIAS MALLON One of the things that is happening, both inevitable and good—in the long run—is that the closer our two groups work, the closer they get to their own sacred symbols. You can't step on a person's toes if you're far away from them. It's only when you get close that really offending their sacred symbols becomes possible. That does open the way to the possibility of greater learning too, on both sides.

RABBI LEON KLENICKI *is director of the department of interfaith affairs of the Anti-Defamation League and liaison representative to the Vatican.*
REVEREND ELIAS MALLON *is associate director of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute.*

Recent Events

LK The latest developments in Poland are an area of great concern for the Jewish-Catholic relationship. Poland is a difficult and sad place for us. To go back to Poland is like walking on our graves because you do not know where Jews were buried by the Nazis. Vis à vis our relation with Poland, we suffer the triumphalism of pain, the pain of the past and of the present. What Cardinal Glemp said is unforgivable, it too is a sort of

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triumphalism: our pain limits our consideration of certain aspects of the dialogue.

EM Leon, it is precisely on this matter of the triumphalism of suffering and pain that there is an imbalance in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue in the U.S. American Roman Catholics did not suffer from the Nazis, except insofar as family members died during the war. Here there is immediate sympathy toward Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, whereas in Poland and Eastern Europe both sides may have the self-righteousness of suffering. In the U.S., I cannot say to Jews, "Well, I suffered too, and I expect you to understand my suffering." In Eastern Europe and Poland they can. Once you start arguing over who suffered more, there is a tremendous problem. That is why the situation in Poland is so different from that in the U.S.

LK Our uneasiness lies in the fact that Polish suffering is regarded as a counterpart to Jewish suffering. During the Nazi period we Jews were condemned to death by our birth. Poles were killed by accident or for the purposes of the local Nazi commander, but there was not a national ideology leading to the destruction of the total Polish population.

EM I am not sure that they see it that way.

LK No, they don't see it that way. But there were no Nuremberg Laws for Slavs. That's what makes the difference.

EM But then it becomes a matter of perceptions, of bringing up pain and saying, "I suffered more than you." In a situation like that it is easy for both sides to focus in on what is wrong with the other side. But it just doesn't go anywhere. Sharing pain is better than comparing pain.

LK Let me express our feelings about the recent developments in Poland. When Maximillian Kolbe was canonized by John Paul II, there was a tremendous reaction in the Jewish community. It was ironic that Kolbe who published the most anti-Semitic magazine in pre-1939 Poland ended up in Auschwitz. But even in the hell of Auschwitz, Kolbe had a right that we Jews did not have. He could give his place for a fellow prisoner.

EM You have to realize though that those are advantages that not many people would be anxious to have.

LK I do recognize that. But if you are in the midst of hell and you can give your place for a fellow prisoner to save them that makes a difference.

EM But you have to understand that that's a difference the subtlety of which might be lost on a great number of people.

LK Yes, but our duty is to emphasize these differences, it is important to express our feelings in the case of Kolbe, of the Auschwitz convent, of the big cross set up before the convent. These diminish the meaning and centrality of Auschwitz as a center of the Jewish Holocaust.

EM I understand that. The problem is that I can also understand how Polish people could take the exact same tack and say that this is a monument to Polish suffering.

LK I would be respectful of that. But let me bring up another element: the fact is the Polish government marks Auschwitz in a way that also diminishes the Jewish aspect of the Auschwitz martyrdom. Even today there is no specific reference to Jewish victims—the plaque says, "people that died." That is why John Paul II stopped at the inscription in Hebrew and Yiddish, and pointed out that millions of Jews died as martyrs in Auschwitz—because the inscription doesn't make any reference to Jewish people.

But then there are certain good developments in Poland: the publication of all of the Vatican II documents on Jews and Judaism that have not been previously published. The booklet that Eugene Fisher and I wrote on rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity has been translated and will be published. In addition the American bishops' document, "In God's Mercy," on how to preach in Holy Week and the presentation of Jews and Judaism, is being translated and will be published by a Catholic publishing company. Those are good signs. Also Cardinal Bernardin organized a whole program in Chicago for Catholic priests and professors from Poland; they will return and bring a lot of information about the history of Judaism, Jewish philosophy, Jewish religious thought. Those are good signs of an ongoing process.

But of course the words of Cardinal Glemp do not help.

EM No, no. We recognize that and we also want to make it clear that entering the cloistered convent doesn't help either. When I see what the Primate of Poland says and then I see [Rabbi Weiss and his group] entering the convent grounds, all I think is, this is a no-win situation. It is sacrilege on both sides.

LK There has been a tendency to go to extremes.

EM It is unfortunate that stuff like that gets so much coverage. Although, on the other hand, if you are the Primate of Poland what you say is, by nature, very public. But incidents like these really hit people at an emotional level that can take a long time to overcome. The Jewish-Catholic dialogue tends to move on a fairly rarefied level: higher clergy, professors, academicians. It takes a long time even when things are going well for that to filter down to the level of the synagogue and the parish. Offensive actions by leaders of both sides have so much power of destruction compared to years and years of dialogue between people of understanding, openness, and goodwill. That frightens me.

LK It is of great concern for me that the Primate of Poland speaks in a sort of 1938 version of anti-Semitism. This is horrible.

EM There is no excuse for that. But I don't think I have heard anyone in Roman Catholic circles try to justify what Cardinal Glemp said.

LK No, no. The reaction of our American cardinals, O'Connor and Law and Bernardin, has been very, very clear. So this opens another vista of the relationship. This is the first time that I remember the cardinals publicly discussing a matter like this. During the council, cardinals were in conflict over dogmatic

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and theological aspects, but I don't remember anything like this.

EM But that may be a mixed blessing.

LK Yes, I understand that.

EM You may find ranks a lot tighter afterwards. Still, I think this allows the Jewish community an opportunity to understand the Roman Catholic community better. The interfaith work I do with Jews, Muslims, and people of other religions shows me that there is a tendency to overstress the importance of popes and cardinals. Obviously they are important, but they probably have less practical importance in the running of the local church than might be thought. For example, I suspect that the Jewish community would have had more success in the convent matter dealing with the major superior of the Carmelite sisters than with the cardinals. That is one of the things we have to learn, how our communities operate.

LK In the U.S., a pluralistic society with the separation of church and state, this is possible. But I come from Argentina. That was not my experience. The official religion of the state according to the constitution is the Roman Catholic church.

EM But even then, the local bishops are more immediately involved than the pope. Usually what you do is to start at the bottom and work to the top. For one thing, if it doesn't work at the bottom, you always have hope of moving up the ladder. Whereas if you start at the top, and it doesn't work there, there's not much hope left.

As the relationship between the Jewish and Catholic communities develops, we each learn more about our structures, which can help avoid problems of unreal expectations.

LK Yes, we still have to overcome certain images of the other. Instead of looking at the other as an object, sometimes as an object of contempt, we have to see the other as a subject of faith. This is a very slow operation. It is painful. I would say that at the present state in my own community, the Catholic-Jewish dialogue has taken ten steps backwards.

EM Oh, it has in the Roman Catholic community too. There is a good deal of anger in the Roman Catholic community.

LK Yes, I can imagine that. But the anger in the Catholic community is over the confrontation of the Jewish community with the cardinals or with the pope.

In the Jewish community we feel that history is repeating itself. What my parents suffered in Poland in their relationship with the local church, with priests, is different from my own experience today. But these recent events in Poland bring back all of that history. I talk to young Jewish people and they may say the same things that my parents said, except that my parents had a direct experience in Poland. But young people born in America have as their best friends the Catholic boy or girl across the street, and have never had the problems I did with my Argentinean Catholic professors in high school. What it shows is that the triumphalism of pain is coming to the next generation without any experience of pain.

EM The U.S. is all that I can really talk of in terms of Roman Catholicism. And here you find a perplexity on the part of Catholics. You know: "here we go again." And every time, it's a "here we go again," said with less patience. There were the difficulties with Cardinal O'Connor in visiting Israel two years ago. Then there was the problem of the pope visiting Waldheim and Waldheim visiting the pope. Now there's the pope's sermon and the Auschwitz convent. It seems to become a litany of complaints against Roman Catholics. If you do that often enough, sensitivity is lowered.

LK But, Elias, you have a collection of strange examples. Take the meeting of Waldheim with the pope. When we met with Cardinal Casaroli and John Paul II in Rome, I said that the pope as a spiritual leader has to meet with the sinner and the saint. That is not a choice for him and I respect that. But to go out of his way to call Mr. Waldheim a man of peace, when we know his history, projects a special message to the world. Now if the pope had received Waldheim and said, welcome to the Holy See and started talking about the beauty of Austria without any reference to Waldheim, then everybody would have understood what the pope was saying. But the pope went out of his way to talk about Waldheim.

In the case of O'Connor, there were mistakes especially by one or two persons who wrote articles on matters that didn't correspond to the trip. O'Connor was very, very honest when he spoke to the Jewish leadership about what he was going to do in Israel. Interpretation by certain characters is another matter....

EM But see the point is....

LK The use and abuse by certain people doesn't justify it.

EM It doesn't justify anything. But it does have an effect on the Catholic populace. That's all I am saying. If you say that recent events have put the Catholic-Jewish dialogue ten steps back on the Jewish side, what I am saying is that it has on the Catholic

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side too. This upsets me quite a bit.

LK Let me emphasize the solid goodness of the dialogue in the U.S. By solid goodness I refer to matters like, for example, the document of the bishops on how to preach in Holy Week and the presentation of Jews and Judaism. This is not only important for this country, but, can you imagine, that will be published in Poland. And it is already in manuscript form in German. In the long run it changes things.

EM That's why it's so important for us to export our successes, rather than import the poisons that come from cultures that have been traditionally, may still be, anti-Semitic. That doesn't mean we should ignore them. But when they become number one on the agenda, then that becomes counterproductive. The confrontation at Auschwitz and everything, good and bad, on both sides, becomes a major topic on the agenda of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue in the U.S. and Canada. That is tragic and it is wrong.

LK I would agree.

EM It must not be.

LK But we are two international bodies, the Catholic church and the Jewish people. We are not only in the U.S., but we are in other countries. Things are very much united in that way.

EM You have to be careful. That is a can of worms, Leon. If they're going to go international then that can open up all kinds of new things. We have to be aware of ourselves as world communities, but still the U.S. is not the world, neither from the Roman Catholic side nor from the Jewish side. And I still think a modest success is better than a spectacular failure. Being aware of the problems in other parts of the world, I don't think it helps to make them our problem.

The Middle East

LK The other aspect that is a great problem in the Catholic-Jewish relationship is the normalization of relations between the Vatican and the state of Israel. I use the word normalization because that's the word that I heard all the time in the Vatican.

EM That's a whole area where the dialogue has to become more open and mature. You could probably come up in the dialogue with a whole string of four-letter words and get away with it easier than using the "P" word, Palestinian. Until we can sit down and talk openly about the Palestinians, the Roman Catholic church is not going to normalize at all. And I think that we might as well be honest about that. And that is going to be a long painful dialogue.

When I come as a Roman Catholic to the Jewish-Catholic dialogue, I don't bring up the Palestinians and when Jewish people come to the dialogue, they do bring up the Poles. That's a massive problem that will have to be discussed. I don't think we're mature enough yet. There's all kinds of pussyfooting, perhaps on both sides, certainly on the Catholic side. Everyone on the Catholic side knows that until the Palestinians are discussed and some kind of just solution is reached, nothing is going to happen at the Vatican. Yet we never say it.

LK Yes, but what happened in 1948-49. I want to remind you that there was an idea of creating a Palestinian state which was swallowed by Jordan and Egypt and still the Vatican did not have....

EM But this is 1989.

LK In 1948–49 the UN wanted to create two states. The Jews accepted the Hebrew state. But there was no Palestinian state. The land was seized by Egypt—Gaza, Jordan took other parts, and the northern parts were taken by Syria. If I am not mistaken, I don't remember any gesture from the Vatican.

EM The Vatican hasn't normalized relations with Jordan either.

LK I understand that. But if the Vatican is now so interested in the Palestinian question, why wasn't it interested in 1948? Why didn't it ask the Arab nations to allow a Palestinian state?

EM I don't know. All I am saying is that it is not 1948 now.

LK It's not 1492 either.

EM In all honesty in terms of normalization, it is a disservice, especially on the part of an American, to say that it's just a matter of time, that it will just work its way out. I don't think it will, to be honest.

LK There is another thing, Elias, that comes to my mind. One of the statements I heard at the Vatican is that there cannot be an exchange of ambassadors because Israel doesn't have declared borders. But there is now an exchange of ambassadors between Poland and the Vatican. Would you say that the frontiers of Poland are the same as September 1, 1939?

EM I think the issue is declared borders. But I am not sure. What I have heard is that Israel has not declared where its borders are.

LK You don't need to declare. The borders are there.

EM I spoke to a man from *Gush Emunim* in Jerusalem who saw the Euphrates as the border.

LK That is not the reality.

EM But again in terms of the dialogue: I do know that in speaking about the state of Israel, until we get to the point where we can talk openly about the Palestinians, it's going to be only on the level of pleasantries. I can guarantee that. And nothing will happen.

LK The American bishops' forthcoming statement on the Middle East is an issue of concern in our community. When Archbishop Roger Mahony returned from the Middle East he

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met with the leadership of the Los Angeles Jewish community. They had the impression that the archbishop's comments on the trip of the episcopal delegation to Israel and the Middle East would be reflected in the bishops' statement. The conversation of Archbishop Mahony reflected a constant criticism of Israel without any consideration for the delicate situation of Israel. That reminds me a little bit of Munich. Everyone wants to appease and appease. We appeased Hitler, and lost Czechoslovakia and then we lost Austria, and then Poland. And then there was no other way but total war. In a way Israel is pushed to give up and give up, and to give up to a group that really wants the destruction of the state of Israel.

We should look at the map. Israel is not Ohio and Indiana. You can go from Jerusalem to the West Bank in a few minutes by jet. This is what Bishop William Keeler [moderator of Catholic-Jewish relations for the U.S. bishops' conference] recently commented. He said that he took a helicopter from Jerusalem and in fifteen minutes he was in the West Bank. And that's the point. To be so near. That is a concern of the Israelis. Where is the security of their borders? Personally I have the feeling that the bishops' document is not taking a pastoral tone but a political one.

EM In the Jewish community there is a variety of views on Israel, on the borders, and on the defense question. To what extent do the bishops have to adhere to one view in order not to seem "unbalanced"?

LK I would say that our main concern is that the document should take account of the delicate situation of Israel in the Middle East. That is crucial. Otherwise it is an ideological view.

EM The document is not out yet and I have not read it. But no matter what they come out with somebody is going to attack them. Someone is not going to be happy with it. That is not the main consideration. Their main consideration is to be fair, and to provide some kind of leadership for Americans in a very complex situation.

They also see it in terms of the Muslim-Catholic dialogue. In no way is this document without a context; it is seen in the context of Catholic-Jewish, Catholic-Muslim, Catholic-Palestinian, Maronite; it's seen within a very broad and sensitive field. Whatever the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the U.S. is, it certainly is cautious. It has never been precipitous in anything. I am looking forward to seeing the document. I may not agree with all of it; I may not agree with most of it. But I cannot believe that it won't be well thought out.

The Dialogue in America

LK Despite the problems we have had in the last year with the Auschwitz convent and the declarations of Cardinal Glemp, I am very optimistic about our future. Despite the problems, we are advancing in the knowledge of each other and in the hopeful realization of our mission. The fact that we are speaking to each

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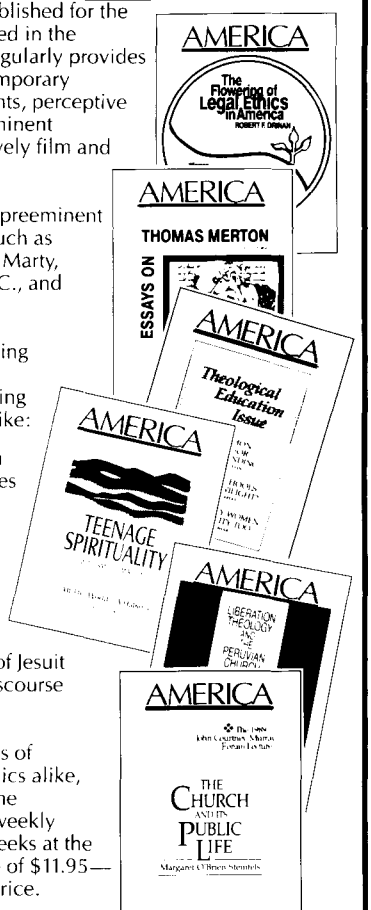

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other, and building together is not an accident of history. It is a sign of God's peace and God's will. We Catholics and Jews have, despite history, the need to examine our history and project our testimony of God in a world that desperately needs that presence of God.

EM For the future we need a continued and increasingly frank dialogue. I would also like to see increasing cooperation in giving witness to the values that we share as religious people in American culture and American society in dealing with questions of racism, poverty, AIDS, war, and justice. As religious people we have things to say and we have things to say together.

LK What would the state of Jewish-Catholic relations be, if it weren't for the Auschwitz convent, if the convent had been moved? I would say that in the U.S. we would continue with our work especially in the area of education. We, at the ADL, for example, are preparing a short history of Christianity for the Jewish community, especially for those Jews involved in dialogue to know exactly what Christianity is. The Archdiocese of Chicago is now publishing a new edition of the service that Eugene Fisher and I prepared to commemorate the Holocaust. I am editing a book on Jewish understandings of Christianity in order to examine Christianity beyond historical problems, in order to comprehend the theological meaning of Christianity. That process would continue without our attention being taken by the Auschwitz event. I feel personally that we continue that way, that we have been slowed down, but that the process continues.

EM There has to be a continued growth to openness in dialogue and an awareness on both sides: on the Christian side to get a deep awareness of exactly how painful Glemp's statements can be, but then on the Jewish side to realize that there is a thing called *ressentiment* [the deliberate re-experiencing of an unpleasant experience in order to re-enforce it]. This is to go back to point zero. I think that if you are back at point zero, then some of that would have to be your fault too. If one man and one national church can put the whole thing back to point zero then nothing has really happened in the dialogue. There is a difference between memory and that *ressentiment*. Memory you have been obliged by God to remember, *ressentiment* is unhealthy.

LK I remember Paul VI once said that the beginnings of peace are the signs of peace. Our conversation is a sign of peace projecting peace to our communities. In our case, for example, I know that I disagree in certain political matters with you. But I feel you as my brother. I have the feeling that we are together in God. That is the sense that I want for the dialogue, to feel that we are together in God despite our different commitments.

EM Then we both as people of faith would have to believe that if God is in this dialogue, no human being could ever put it back to point zero.

LK Dialogue is a process that might go through a temporary crisis, crisis in the Greek meaning, between two moments of glory. But we cannot stop anymore the process of dialogue.

EM Not if we believe in the God who judges. □

Virginia Schauble

Moving into Light

Grief is a strange land, tundra sharp.
For days at a time only winded stillness
prevails. The heart, of a new necessity,
must speak rightly to itself or wither.
Brief sun, stark land forms, no echoes,
air is made of ears and lips
which speak soundlessly. The eyes
learn to look into wind.
Absence is entity.

An arctic willow stands, though tendrilous
and bending. Its fierceness, a test of fragility,
lasts year upon year; a wolf crouches in its core,
a wolf with willow eyes.
I am that wolf in the willow, growing a
single ring, barely discernible, in the span
of thirteen moons. Guarding,
storing light, close to the ground
my life; I howl, green-throated,
then run upward into light. No echo,
ever. My heart goes hoarse without speech.

Wolf sees those crude eyes of Silence staring
unrelenting, unblinking,
beckoning its power be returned.
Mine: apprenticed power. Those eyes are fire.
My insides roar.
Silence holds, though fleeting and rare,
light a storm of color. I devour it,
searching carefully for small bones
or grit of sound and shiver in the presence
of those crude eyes
which bring such odd fare.

I paw the ground and look into wind for certainty.
No malice here. Still my insides roar.
I swallow green fire and run beyond a howl's force,
looking for speech,
finding only Silence staring back, beckoning
in darkness. Unguarded apprentice, I guard the willow,
proof
of my life moving upward
into light.

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GOD IS MY CLIENT

CIVIL SUITS AND INJURED PEOPLE

TIMOTHY J. REULAND

THE LAITY & THE LIFE OF FAITH

As my adult life has unfolded, I have become a lawyer, a husband, and a father. These are the major roles through which I have tried to live and to understand my faith in God.

As a lawyer, I work on civil trials, spending my days within the adversarial system of settling controversies between persons and businesses. The people I represent believe they have been economically or physically wronged and want redress; or else they stand charged with having done wrong to others. If we cannot find common ground through negotiations, then we must hammer out justice before a judge or a jury. I relish this work because of the opportunity it gives me to affect the lives of individual persons.

However, the pressures are immense to ignore individuals and the nuances of their particular controversies. Courts and administrative agencies, even when ably run, are often jammed. Insurers, dealing with huge numbers of claimants, often resort to categorizing them. Even lawyers, their clients' advocates, must translate controversies into the appropriate legal framework and risk losing, in the translation, the extent of the human suffering at issue.

A large part of my practice consists of representing persons injured by torts—the negligence of others while driving, making a product, or rendering professional services. My temptation is to view the victim simply as a member of some category—say, as just one more whiplash case. Illinois's public policy, as expressed in its workers' compensation laws, seems to encourage this depersonalization. Practitioners regularly refer to cases in the most impersonal terms; a person whose life has been diminished by a disabling hand injury, for example, is "50 percent of a hand."

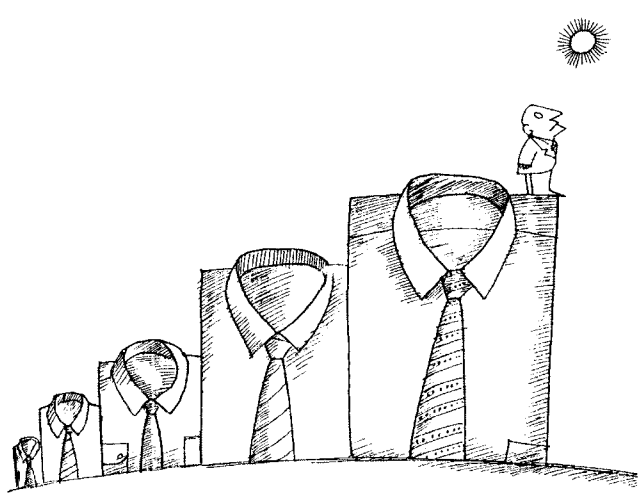
We lawyers are pushed not to stand for the individual with all the rough edges, quirks, or unique aspects his or her case presents. Of course lawyers are not alone in feeling such pressures. Friends who are physicians tell me their experiences are similar. Their judgments about an individual patient are questioned, and sometimes constrained, by the policies of HMOs or insurers on what is "usual, customary, or proper" medical care.

There are pressures closer to home, too. As one of the principals of an eleven-lawyer firm, I live with the businessperson's daily concerns: with personnel issues and the need to generate dollars for salaries, overhead, and plain, sweet profit. On some days, the total impact of all these forces seems to counsel: Move the cases, skip the nuances.

My faith helps me to push back against such pressures. When I read the Gospel accounts of Christ's encounters with individuals—the tax collectors, the adulteresses, those struggling with whether to believe—I am struck repeatedly by his clear perception of them as individuals, his concern for them as individuals, his affirmation of them as individuals. I see how he stands with them when they are about to be stoned, and ultimately sends them away affirmed. I hope and trust that the Lord will deal with me in the same way, and I try to adopt his approach with the clients I serve.

When I do tort work, I try to understand the full impact of the client's pain, suffering, and individual losses. When I sit across the desk from an individual, I determine to do whatever is necessary to develop clearly and fully the impact of an injury or a contract dispute upon *that individual* .

I try to grasp the nuances. This takes time and patience. Often a client cannot ably articulate the life changes an injury has wrought, so that I must talk to his or her friends, family members, or co-workers to understand the full meaning of the case. Particularly when my work gets painstaking and grueling, when listening becomes hard, I reflect that God loves my individual client as much as he loves me and everyone else. The



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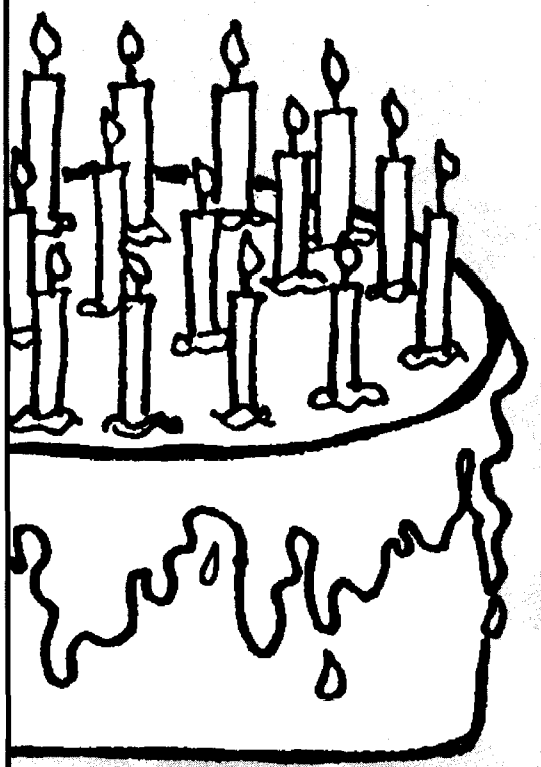
CELEBRATE



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client deserves my full attention, and I try to deliver it.

Just as my faith and reading of the Gospels influences how I try to practice law and treat my clients, I know my practice of law has affected my faith and the way I see my relationship to God.

In professional situations I act for others; I become their means of expression or presence in a situation. I view my role as a Christian in much the same way. I can be God's agent in all the situations that arise in my life—professional and otherwise. Just as I must make a client's viewpoint and interests felt, so too I must make the Lord's interests present in my life situations: as a lawyer, yes, but also as husband, father, citizen, friend, businessperson.

This is not to say that I view myself as "another Christ," as my early religious education counseled. I feel I am no more Christ than I am the aggrieved client when I go to court. I am who I am, with my own identity and limitations, but I can be an agent—a trustee, a spokesman—for a principal, be he or she an injured client or the Lord. As an agent, I try to understand my principal's interests and goals and I try to bring about the results that principal wants or needs.

I have asked myself what is this God like, who chooses, or, perhaps needs, to work through agents. Certainly God trusts us. Like my clients, God wants me to stand for and advance his interests and purposes. Also like my clients, his interests may be hurt by my neglect, inattention, lack of preparation, or inabilities. Nonetheless, God continues to engage me and to count on me. As when I know a client is counting on me, I try to give God my best attention—through prayer, through reading the Scriptures, through listening to him in others.

This sense of being God's agent has informed my understanding of being a husband. In my marriage to my wife Kate I am one of God's means to continue to create her, to make love incarnate in her life, and to redeem any aspect of her life that may need it. She is the same for me. Our faith counsels us that we are, in each other's lives, avenues of God's grace and goodness. Because of our individual histories and personalities, and our shared experiences and intimacy, Kate and I ought to be the best bets for bringing about in each other's lives all the goodness God wants to show us.

Just as faith in God has helped me understand my role in marriage, my marriage has affected my understanding of God. As I have learned more over the years about loving and being loved, I have seen the counterpoints of initiation and acceptance that loving involves. I have come to understand more fully the openness that lovers must have to one another, and the vulnerability and being-at-risk that such openness sometimes entails.

These experiences have appreciably softened my view of the Lord. If "God is love" to us, I imagine that he has some of my same experiences. God initiates some things, accepts others. Like Kate and me, God is open, vulnerable, and at risk for all the communication, joys, and pains that a fleshy, in-depth relationship with a human being entails.

The sense that God's relationship to me has a component of

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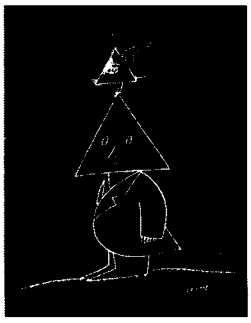

In 1987, *Commonweal* published a series of articles by lay people who described their personal experience of faith in the work place. We received such positive response to the series that we have decided to continue it. We asked each individual: How is your Catholic faith manifest in your daily life and work? How has faith shaped your choices: vocational, financial, ethical; and vice versa? Where do you find spiritual strength and guidance?

Our fourth contributor to this series is Timothy J. Reuland, an attorney who lives in Aurora, Illinois.

vulnerability to my conduct makes me a better listener in prayer, as in my life with Kate. I try to be more solicitous of what really may be going on in the life of the other, to be more attentive to the other's real needs in a given situation.

Just as I can be one of God's agents to reach clients and Kate, so can I be to our children. We have three, one of whom is just moving into adolescence, and both Kate and I can feel the multiple influences, in addition to ours, which now bear increasingly upon our children's lives. Eleven years ago, at the arrival of our firstborn, we received a plaque with an inscription which said that there are two gifts parents can give their children—one is roots and the other is wings. We have done a good many years of rooting or nurturing, but it seems that ever increasingly we are giving wings.

As a father responding to a child's claim that "I can do it," I find I must step back, stand by, and watch. Those claims started, as far as I can now recall, at around age two with some fairly simple tasks. But now both the theme, "I can do it," and the implication, "without your help," repeat themselves in ever more complicated situations. And so it must be, I am told, for healthy growth.

This experience as a father has enriched my sense of God, who, like me, has helped bring into the world persons who are destined to grow, change, decide. God must have the same sense of having to step back, stand by, and watch as a developing human being learns life's skills. As I sometimes do, the Lord must clearly foresee the "bad result" that seems inevitable—the spill, the crash, the fall. Yet, as I do, the Lord stands back, watches, and grants the freedom to explore, to discover, to sense new strength and skill, and to learn. What respect and love this takes!

One should not presume from all that I have said above about seeing myself as "God's agent," that I go through life burdened by some sense of obligation at every turn. The feeling is rarely one of burden, and is mostly one of opportunity. My sense of God working through agents enhances my joy in the lives and actions of others. Just as I believe I can and should be God's agent in the lives of others, I know others can be and are in mine. I try to be open to direction, grace, joy, inspiration, and pleasure, which God might be trying to give me through others. This doesn't mean that I try "to see God" in others, as if some common denominator, with which I would be comfortable, could be found in each of them. No, I try to see them in them, and to enjoy what is unique about them. When I do so, I find that not only my wife and children, but also my clients and others, are to me exactly what I hope to be to them: agents of love and goodness in my life. God's hands, heart, and mind can be anywhere. □

SCREEN

SCORCHING THE SCREEN

'SEX, LIES' & 'LETHAL WEAPONS'

Laura San Giacomo has Sophia Loren's firm, sensual mouth and coloring and a throaty voice that would turn Warren Beatty's head at fifty yards. As Cynthia in writer/director Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape*, she plays a younger sister out to settle sibling grievances with a scorched bed campaign. She sizzles, and her physical presence is as lacerating as the razor-edged lines Soderbergh supplies.

Andie MacDowell plays older sister Ann, an ethereal beauty whose proper attitudes and manners hide the usual dissatisfactions. Ann may be pious, but she is also pensive, and her conventional presentation of self is easily mistaken for a lack of heart. As Soderbergh has written her, and Miss MacDowell radiantly plays it, Ann, though easily shocked, is both a shrewd judge of other people's foibles and obliquely troubled by her own. Still, her own motivations and desires remain largely a mystery to her. Indeed, how Ann ended up with such a vile mate is one of the movie's nagging incongruities.

Peter Gallagher plays Ann's callow husband John. This ambitious lawyer and priapismic philanderer can barely stop smirking and scheming long enough to take calls at the office. Gallagher gives his character—a nattily suspendered overachiever—all the charm of a dirty-minded eleven-year-old caught pulling the wings off flies. Rutting with his wife's sister, John exudes an almost infantile sense of entitlement. Gallagher makes a loathsome exhibition of himself without ever turning John into a stereotype; in many ways John is the film's most indelible character. This Janus-faced lawyer is Soderbergh's demonic villain, the product of a world immured in false images and endless consumption. Unable to differentiate between people and things, his own desires and the responsibility he owes to others, John is the triumphant narcissist celebrated in commercials and college catalogues. He lurches about at the center of Soderbergh's dark vision of American life, a professional liar living an almost hallucinatory existence. Unattached in any meaningful way to his wife, mistress, or even his work,

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John is a cipher.

Graham (James Spader) brings a prophet's mysterious authority and contempt for complacency to his encounter with this incestuous trio. A drifter with a bohemian aura and a prying video camera, Graham is at once timid, morose, and confrontational. Like Art Linkletter's little kids, he'll say the darnedest things. He just wants to be left alone with his sense of degradation and his fabulous toys. It's a difficult part, for while Graham is the story's moral provocateur and hero, he is also its most artificial and instrumental agent. In his adolescent moodiness and desire to shock, he's tiresome. His video games seem more like a prop than a voyeuristic obsession. But Spader, with his boyish good looks and nervous confessions, does a superior job of balancing the movie's outsized ambitions and the specific demands of character.

Set in contemporary Louisiana, *sex, lies, and videotape* is an astonishing feat for a first-time feature filmmaker. Soderbergh, twenty-six, elicits splendid performances from his actors. He has a superb ear for how people talk around what they mean to say. His command of the camera seems effortless, and he brings to his story a rare intimacy, exploration of character, and concern for psychological nuance. This is a hypnotic film.

Sophisticated, witty, and sincere, *sex, lies, and videotape* deserves the praise it has enjoyed. It won best picture at the Cannes Film Festival. However, there is a soap opera dimension to this tale of sexual love lost and redeemed. Graham, a kind of suburban version of Hemingway's sexually wounded Jake Barnes, uses the video camera to insulate himself from any real emotional or sexual contact. Ironically, Graham's camera brings him closer to Cynthia and Ann than lover/husband John could ever get. This tidy reversal is a bit of a cliché, as is the juxtaposing of the sensitive, failed artist with the aggressive, wholly self-serving lawyer. John and Cynthia see each other almost literally as sex objects, while Ann is a paragon of Victorian repression longing to be set free. Soderbergh's relative shortcomings lie in the summing up.

The closer we get to the so-called truth behind Graham's debilitating alienation, the murkier things become. Graham's precise emotional injury is left pretentiously vague. Worse, his sexual reawakening is too magical. Soderbergh's cathartic sexual resolution, where all the paraphernalia is shunted aside and love, not sexual fantasy, brings people together, is merely wishful. Ann's sudden and purposeful blossoming is a storybook ending, a princess brought back to life with a videotaped kiss. In a similar position, Hemingway's hero could only rebuff Lady Brett Ashley with a more sober and truer, "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

There is enough explicit homoeroticism in *Lethal Weapon 2* to get the propeller on Senator Jesse Helms's beany spinning like a dervish. Moviegoers need not be alarmed, however. This is a story of true love.

Heartthrob Mel Gibson (*The Year of Living Dangerously*) has never looked prettier, Danny Glover (*Crimes of the Heart*) never more endearing, than they do reprising their roles as Los Angeles's most perfect couple. In the popular *Lethal Weapon*, Gibson and Glover were mutually suspicious detectives who wisecracked their way to interracial harmony through a thousand car crashes. Gibson played Martin Riggs, an unstable and unpopular but absolutely fearless Vietnam veteran with a penchant for using his skull as a nightstick. With a touch of gray in his hair, Glover played Detective Sergeant Roger Murtaugh, a stolid police veteran, middle-class homeowner, and fretting family man. Murtaugh's reassuring home life and psychological composure contrasted sharply with Riggs's haphazard existence. Riggs was the so-called "lethal weapon," and Murtaugh's soothing influence tamed him. Among other things, it was the old odd couple routine.

Lethal Weapon 2 ratchets up the level of violence and male bonding. There's more of everything here, from car chases to various forms of demolition work. In between the gunplay, our attractive heroes are whispering sweet nothings to each other. Some of the rare moments of intimacy include Glover stuck on a booby-trapped toilet bowl with Gibson holding his hands and plighting his troth. Or Gibson, having been mauled by South African villains, hovering between death and the next fearless quip while cradled in Glover's lap. This is a buddy movie that puts professions of love where John Wayne's silent shrugs used to be.

Like its predecessor, *Lethal Weapon 2* is well-written and competently acted. It's blood-drenched fluff, but there is real chemistry between these two accomplished actors, and director Richard Donner (*Superman*) laces the sentiment with wit, both visual and verbal.

Our invincible duo is pitted against an army of catastrophically Caucasian South African drug dealers this time. Joss Ackland plays Arjen Rudd, a jowly South African diplomat who combines a Nazi's sadism with a banker's fastidiousness. His henchmen appear to be drawn from a race of albino mutants. There hasn't been a collection of blond psychopaths like this since Visconti's Nazi nursery tale, *The Damned*.

Once our All-American couple is pushed "beyond the law," the ensuing carnage seems straight out of the Clint Eastwood-Dirty Harry School of Swift and Sure Retribution. Everything from nail guns to seagoing cargo containers is used to drive the point home, so to speak.

Lethal Weapon 2 is trashy and tawdry, but it moves so quickly you barely have time to feel shame. As the film itself acknowledges, the story is little more than a Three Stooges romp, where guns and other forms of mayhem have been substituted for the mops, ladders, and pails, the eye-poking and nose-twisting. In fact, *Lethal Weapon 2* even provides a third stooge, admirably played by Joe Pesci (*Raging Bull*) as a witness placed under Riggs's and Murtaugh's protection. This trio slaps and bashes into each other in some of the film's most entertaining moments. Pesci is a voluble little nerd, brightening every scene he's in. Sadly, he seems a harbinger of sequels to come.

PAUL BAUMANN

Paul Baumann is a staff writer and movie critic for The Day *in New London, Connecticut. He is filling in for Tom O'Brien, who is on vacation.*

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Sherry pursues Greene: Greene stays ahead

THE LIFE OF GRAHAM GREENE
Volume I: 1904-1939
Norman Sherry
Viking, $29.95, 783 pp.

Robert E. Hosmer

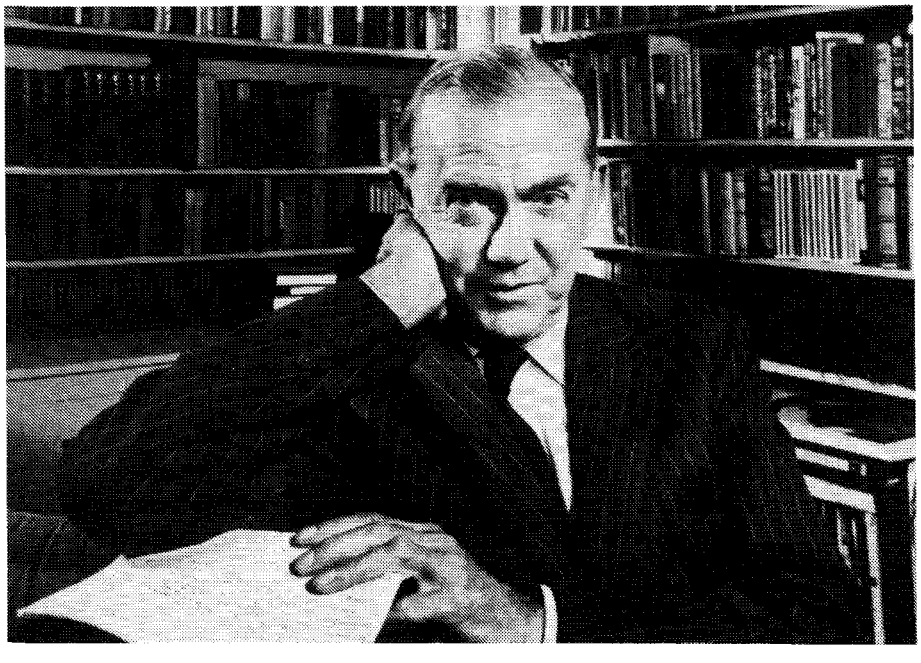
Though deconstructionists and others have sought to deny, even eliminate, any consideration of the author from the study of texts, they've not succeeded, to judge from the reading public's voracious appetite for literary biographies. In the second half of this century we have witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of compendious literary biographies: Edel's five-volume study of James, Ellmann's lives of Joyce and Wilde, Atlas's life of Delmore Schwartz, and Michael Holroyd's volumes on Strachey and Shaw spring to mind—and these but represent a host of other lives. Recently we've seen lives of Faulkner, Plath, Townsend-Warner—even Irwin Shaw. And we eagerly await contributions like Holroyd's second volume on Shaw and Sally Fitzgerald's biography of Flannery O'Connor. This is indisputably an age of literary biography, some of it even first-rate.

As Malcolm Bradbury has noted, "...we find ourselves in an era of literary lives of strong resonance and great mass, works where no stone seems to be left unturned, no oral source unspoken to, no postcard wandering through the mails left unretrieved." He might well have been describing Norman Sherry's life of Graham Greene. In 1977 Greene himself selected Sherry, an expert on Conrad, as his official biographer. Thirteen years' research and literary sleuthing have yielded Volume I, the text of which originally ran to 1500 pages. Certainly the reader who finishes a published text of 783 pages needs to ask whether or not it has been worth the time and effort—for both author and reader.

How disappointing and distressing it is to conclude that Sherry's *Life* does not give the reader a palpable sense of the texture of this great writer's experience. This study fails to bring us closer to the greater realities of Greene's life; his spirituality, his sense of his vocation as man and artist, and his life as husband and father remain vague and uncomfortably mysterious.

To be sure, Sherry's labors have yielded some substantial results. His interviews with Vivien Greene, the writer's wife, with members of the Greene family, with "old boys" from Berkhamsted, Greene's public school, and Balliol, his Oxford college, with Zoe Richmond, the wife of the psychologist who treated the adolescent Greene, and with others who played roles both major and minor in Greene's life contribute to our knowledge of his life and times. Likewise the observations and reflections of individuals like Harold Acton, Peter Quennell, and Evelyn Waugh lend vital authenticity to this book. Sherry has pored over archival material—letters to and from Greene, diaries, radio/television transcripts and tapes, newspaper accounts, drafts and manuscripts of Greene's work—and incorporated the results, sometimes to effect, in the biography.

The wealth of detail included by Sherry, clearly the result of painstaking and meticulous scholarship, enhances the text in places—the accounts of Greene's youth and adolescence, his African trek in 1935, and his excursion into Mexico in 1938; each of these narrative set-pieces is particularly vivid and immediate because of the detail. Sherry's scholarship pays off in recounting Greene's libelous review of Shirley Temple in *Wee Willie Winkie* and in his convincing account of how Greene's reading of Henry James suggested innovations in his own writing that led to the



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success of Greene's first bestseller, *Stamboul Train* (1932).

But of what possible relevance is the date of Greene's cutting his first tooth? Or a three-line description of the press that printed the baby book in which his mother recorded details of his infancy? Or Greene's theft of a book from W. H. Smith? Or his notes on a film about coition among earthworms? Or his diary entry on copulating dogs and cats?

Sherry's penchant for wondering, his persistent use of formulas like "perhaps," "must have," "could well have," "probably," "might," and similar terms creates the convincing force of an unexpressed and unsupported logic. As Victoria Glendinning wrote in an essay on biography: "we have learnt to beware of those biographies that are cluttered with sentences like 'Miss Muffet must have felt...' or 'The spider probably wondered.... It is more satisfactory to acknowledge gaps in one's understanding, to face up to the silences, rather than to fill them in with white noise...." Moreover, Sherry offers some curious conclusions without explanation or convincing evidence, for example: "he [Greene] turned to Catholicism for the wrong reasons" (what exactly are "wrong reasons" for religious conversion? did Greene have them? how do we know?). In another context, we read this about *Brighton Rock*: "the strangest aspect of the novel, however, is the development of the religious theme which changed it from a story about gang warfare into a struggle between good and evil set against a representative background of human society." (Why "strangest"?)

But the most disturbing weaknesses of the *Life* fall under the category of "literary." Sherry's prose, with its passive constructions, repetitive syntax, and clichés, is often less than fresh and graceful; an example or two, not unfairly chosen: "The green baize door was to become the division between heaven and hell, the gate that separated Eden from the wilderness of the world"; "he was in seventh heaven"; "fate...had dashed the cup of success from his lips."

Sherry's elaborate source hunting and obsession with details do irreparable damage to this *Life*, for he has not crafted a taut narrative line on which to string all his information. A good biography cannot be but a gathering of details; it "is itself a kind of novel" (Cynthia Ozick), with the shape, dynamic structure, plot, and tension we expect from well-crafted fiction. Details need to be chosen according to some principle(s) of selection; without that, chapters, even whole texts, run the risk of becoming strings of quotation with commentary. That is sometimes true here, as in the case of "The Pleasure Dome," a seventeen-page chapter that consists of excerpts from Greene's film reviews with a few summary comments. In his discussions of Greene's work, Sherry attempts to answer more questions than anyone, even Greene, might ask or even want answered. Indeed, Sherry's literary criticism is pedestrian: his consideration of the novels lumps plot summary, quotation, and trite commentary. For *The Power and the Glory*, arguably Greene's masterpiece, Sherry offers this stunning critical judgment: "The basic theme of the novel, the examination of the nature of goodness and evil and the conclusion that there can be no clear definition of either, is one of Greene's strongest convictions."

This *Life of Graham Greene* lacks a coherent, sustained, and articulated design: the sheer accumulation of information lumped into roughly, though not uniformly observed, chronological categories, does not exert the necessary pressures of form or structure on this biography. The biographer must do what the subject often cannot do: achieve sufficient distance from the life to grasp the design of an individual's existence. If Sherry has perceived a figure in the carpet of Greene's life, he has not permitted himself "the imagination of form and structure," which Leon Edel has called "the only imagination a biographer can be allowed."

Sherry's consistent concern to explain fiction by reference to the artist's life reduces the work to little more than a transcription of experience and drastically restricts the role of the imaginative invention. Biography becomes a mere proof text. No wonder we're left with a more-than-vague sense of discomfort as well as unanswered questions, for we have come away without knowing the subject of this biography. Despite prodigious labor, Sherry has not revealed Graham Greene as artist or soul. □

THE OEDIPAL ENTERPRISE

RUIN THE SACRED TRUTHS
Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present
Harold Bloom
Harvard University Press, $20, 200 pp.

David Castronovo

During the last fifteen years Harold Bloom has invented his own brand of psychological literary criticism: essentially unconcerned with the traditional analysis of authors' personalities, childhood traumas, and family situations, he has pioneered a new approach that focuses on the anxieties, burdens, and aggressions that a writer feels when he takes up his pen. Bloom's authors—including Jeremiah, Shakespeare, Milton, and Kafka—are ruthless competitors with their literary precursors, strong sons engaged in the Oedipal enterprise of overcoming their fathers and creating permanent places for themselves. Bloom's vision is a passionate and personal account of why writers create. Avoiding ponderous dismantlings of literature and ideas, autopsies on poems, he gives readers the story of his own search to know himself through books. Each author that Bloom treats illustrates his theme eloquently: how the past and our ambivalence toward it is a starting point for freedom. At a time when literary criticism often seems to be an endless seminar about obscure questions of lin-

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guistic usage, *Ruin the Sacred Truths* helps to clear a space for literature as a succession of new spiritual experiences.

This criticism is no clever game for professors, no precious savoring of plural meanings and ambiguities. Teaching at Yale as Sterling Professor of the Humanities in an era when some of his colleagues have become more involved with the slippery, tricky qualities of language than with the individual stamp of a writer's style, Bloom is a champion of identity. Opposing the weight of "belief" to the freedom of "poetry," he describes a world in which the most original figures transform their intellectual and spiritual heritage. The writers he considers stand out as distinct and powerful imposers of ethical stories, private beliefs, psychological attitudes toward their characters, and luminous images of the soul and intellect. Although the book seems rather abstract at times because it does not deal with the details of biography and literary culture, it succeeds in making the texts clear markers in the history of consciousness. Figures do not blur into each other—and the reader follows a succession of very dramatic conflicts between authors. T.S. Eliot's idea of tradition and the individual talent—writers earning their places in a large historical process which they in turn alter—is seemingly behind Bloom's philosophy of literature. But this book, and the earlier *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) give detailed accounts of how a new book purposely distorts, misreads, and overpowers an older work or tradition. Unlike Eliot's civilized world of poet-thinkers, Bloom's creative universe is ferocious, mocking, resentful, and ultimately murderous. Creativity is theft, manhandling, misappropriation, and willful destruction. Only weak authors idealize and imitate their predecessors. The likes of Dante and Kafka use Christian and Jewish doctrine, ideals, and figures of speech for their own literary-egotistical purposes. Nice authors finish weakly. Hemingway once acknowledged that he was in the ring with Stendhal and again with Balzac, but no one would get him in the ring with Tolstoy unless he went crazy or kept getting better. Bloom only selects writers whose originality lies in a threatened and exhilarated sense of others' achievements.

First offered as the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard in 1987-88, the chapters of this book are a short course in Bloom's approach. He shows how Dante "swerves" from Virgil, avoids Augustine's vision, seeks salvation through the invented figure of Beatrice, and glorifies his own achievement by having his ancestor Cacciaguida praise *The Divine Comedy*. With Shakespeare, Bloom suggests how the influence of Chaucer's self-evaluating characters, especially the Pardoner, lead to the breakthrough into modern consciousness seen in Hamlet or Lear or other introspective, developing characters. Using a phrase from Hegel, Bloom sees self-conscious characters as "free artists of themselves." He traces the way in which literary imagination attaches itself to and wrenches itself from the past. Blake tries to cancel the Hebrew Bible, but winds up writing bibles of his own. Wordsworth finds strength in personal memory. With Kafka and Freud (the latter, after all, a storyteller), Bloom examines Jewish prohibitions, idolatry, and the superego and its relationship to Mosaic law. The ideas here are especially valuable in linking these two writers with a desire to reinvent Jewish culture. Rupturing their relationship to orthodox tradition, they nevertheless long for continuity and "inwardness" as opposed to the world's ambitions and drives. Bloom ends with Samuel Beckett's rebellion against his "father" Joyce's "apotheosis of the word." Here he also links Beckett to Schopenhauer's pessimism, only to show how the contemporary writer's mockery is a new form of the sublime, a spectacular denial of human illusions.

With a canvas like this, Bloom must be careful not to lose his readers in a tangle of ideas. The dangers of his special lexicon—with words like "metalepsis" and "transumption" used to describe artistic revision—are also obvious. But the attentive reader will be impressed with Bloom's devotion to his role of teacher-sage, communicator of the complexity and grandeur of creative life across the centuries. □

WAR ON ITS WAY OUT?

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John Mueller
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Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., $22.95, 480 pp.

Charles R. Morris

There is a building sense in the Western community that the Cold War, the forty-year contest between the industrialized liberal democracies and the Communist dictatorships of Asia and Eastern Europe, if not exactly over, is rapidly running its course. The recent horrors in China's Tiananmen Square, in a perverse way, help reinforce that view. In China, in the western and southern border areas of the Soviet Union, in Poland and Hungary, there is a massive, grass-roots rejection of the Marxist-Leninist vision that, since 1917, has been the sole justification for inflicting terror, death, and human degradation on an unimaginable scale.

The present turmoil in the Communist world, however, drives home forcefully that the Cold War, after all, was *about* something. The Communist rulers themselves, with their string of recent admissions of judicial murders, the death camps in the Ukraine, the slaughter in Katyn Forest, seem to concede as much.

Two of the three books under review here are still relatively oblivious to this

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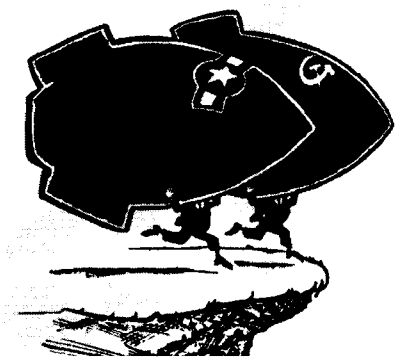
recognition. Anders Stephanson's *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy* is the academic book supreme—elegant, highly intelligent, beautifully argued, and utterly sterile. George F. Kennan, of course, was one of the few seminal thinkers in American foreign policy and the articulator of the policy of "containment" which has structured American-Soviet relations since 1946. Stephanson purports to show through a close textual analysis of two decades of Kennan's dispatches, letters, speeches, and public writings, how egregiously Kennan, and through him the rest of the American foreign policy establishment, misunderstood Stalin's motives and intentions and so helped bring on the Cold War.

John Newhouse's *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*, a deeply confused book, is the companion volume to the thirteen-part PBS television series on the nuclear age. In Newhouse's hands, Cold War history is an exceedingly simple story: American scientists invented some fearsome weapons; the Soviets, perforce, frantically copied them; there was a crisis in the early 1960s, after which, just one tick ahead of a relentless doomsday clock, nearly thirty years have been consumed desperately negotiating nuclear arms control agreements—recounted here in the most tedious detail.

It is a welcome tonic to turn to John Mueller's *Retreat from Doomsday*, a straightforward, common-sensical, thoroughly engaging, and strikingly original account of the decline of war as a problem-solving tool in disputes between great powers. It is the more the pity that Mueller's level gaze, his lack of cant, and general good humor, should be such an exception in the mountain of writing on military and strategic developments in the postwar era. The fact that he offers little comfort to ideologues of either the left or the right is a measure of the good sense of his thesis.

Following World War II, after some hesitation in facing up to the nature of Stalin's rule in Eastern Europe, the United States interposed its power to block any further extension of European communism. Mueller does not believe that Stalin ever intended to launch an invasion of Western Europe, although he does not



belittle contemporary fears. But he suggests that American nuclear capability was, at best, marginally relevant in determining the final shape of the uneasy postwar European settlement. Stalin had plenty of reason to fear American power with or without nuclear weapons. In a non-nuclear world, once American troops were gone from the continent, a Soviet assault might have enjoyed early successes. But the Soviets certainly understood that sooner or later America's "lethargic juggernaut" would haul itself back to Europe and grind them to bits. While the prospect of a nuclear Armageddon added a certain literary resonance to the horrors of a future global war, all of the European nations—winners or losers, Russia included—had suffered horrors enough in the just-ended "conventional" war to be amply deterred from a casual resort to arms.

The Korean War, far from legitimizing "limited war" in the nuclear age, demonstrated that *any* conventional confrontation between major powers would be extraordinarily costly; at the very least, it probably squelched any lingering Communist appetite for invading neighboring states. With the possible exception of the Cuban missile crisis, the two superpowers have stayed well away from direct confrontations ever since. Staring episodes, like that in the Middle East in 1973, have been both infrequent and circumspect. And even in Cuba, Mueller argues, the recently released "Ex Comm" transcripts and other background material suggest that the actual risk of war was much more remote than generally believed.

The great virtue of Mueller's book is to put some reasonable perspective on the American intellectual obsession with nuclear weapons. The nuclear "war-fighting" theories on the febrile right are as far removed from reality as the eschatological hand-wringing on the left. "War among developed countries," Mueller concludes, "has gradually moved toward terminal disrepute because of its perceived repulsiveness and futility." Nuclear weapons "have not had an important impact on this remarkable trend....Rather, it seems, things would have turned out much the same had nuclear weapons never been invented."

Newhouse's *War and Peace* is a good example of the thinking that Mueller is targeting. As Newhouse would have it, "The effect of nuclear weapons on relations between adversaries...is without precedent. The same may be said of their effect on relations between allied countries....The nuclear weapon, as distinct from traditional considerations, has defined these relations and set the history of our time on its curious course...." Despite much huffing and puffing, Newhouse never succeeds in demonstrating his thesis. Nuclear weapons were irrelevant in the Korean War—their use against the Chinese, Newhouse suggests, would have *prolonged* the fighting. Khrushchev bullied Kennedy at Vienna even though the U.S., as Kennedy knew, enjoyed overwhelming nuclear superiority, and so on.

Newhouse's single-minded focus on nuclear issues creates an oddly misshapen book. The Cold War seems to spring autonomously from the presence of the American and Soviet nuclear arsenals. There is a scant paragraph on Stalin's Eastern European policy and only two passing mentions of Yalta, none of Teheran. More puzzling, there is scarcely any attention given to nuclear strategy. The RAND corporation is never mentioned. Bernard Brodie, arguably the father of nuclear strategy, is quoted but once, and, I believe, out of context, to the effect that nuclear weapons mean the end of all strategy. Issues swim in and out of our ken primarily as they come up in arms control negotiations.

The peculiar emphasis of Newhouse's book is probably explained by the author's service in the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the

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Carter administration. Relations between Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance receive far more attention than those between Roosevelt and Stalin. Newhouse writes that the 1974 Vladivostok accords—the never-accepted forerunner of the never-ratified SALT II—were "historic," and "a major reference point for the nuclear age." There are pages of eye-glazing detail on the Guadeloupe conference, hardly one of the momentous gatherings of modern times. Taken as a whole, Newhouse's book stands in stark contrast to the balance and common sense of Mueller's book.

Readers expecting to find an analysis of George Kennan's career as a diplomat or a coherent history of American postwar diplomacy will be sorely disappointed by Anders Stephanson's *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy*. They will find, instead, an awkward mixture of political history and literary criticism, a "poststructuralist" look at the Cold War, in the spirit of Foucault and Derrida.

Stephanson's method is a detailed textual critique of virtually everything Kennan said or wrote from the 1930s through the 1950s. Stephanson is an accomplished stylist, steeped in American and European political literature. Occasionally, as in his analysis of the roots of Kennan's "organicist conservatism," his writing is a sheer pleasure. But these are small oases in long stretches of arid logic-chopping, much of it tortuous, trivial, and irritatingly tendentious.

In the first place, there is no attempt to tailor the analysis to the occasion. Casual asides or personal letters dashed off in haste are submitted to the same relentless scrutiny, the same tireless search for contradiction or internal inconsistency as the weightiest state papers. Pity anyone subjected to such examination. Kennan, for example, wrote in one instance that ideology "colors what the Russians see...." But earlier he said that Marxism was "a prism through which the world is viewed." Stephanson pounces triumphantly: to see *through* a prism is a much different proposition from mere "coloring." Kennan is obviously very confused, and Stephanson follows with a full page analyzing Kennan's "analytical predicament."

Stephanson's dogmatic insistence that there was nothing extraordinary about Stalin's state is bizarrely anachronistic, an echo of radical 1960s' revisionism. He finds Kennan's distinctions between "civilized" and "uncivilized" nations simply incoherent. Although he seems prepared to admit that Stalin was a bit of a ruffian, the blame for subsequent unpleasantness rests squarely on the United States.

Stephanson is clearly entitled to his viewpoint. Since he is obviously a capable scholar, it would have been interesting to see him argue it. Save for some discursive asides in the book's notes, Stephanson fails to make his argument in any sustained manner. He merely *assumes* it as the context for his critique of Kennan. The entire exercise, therefore, seems meretricious, a slothful trick to avoid the hard work of defending a thesis.

Mueller's *Retreat from Doomsday* is

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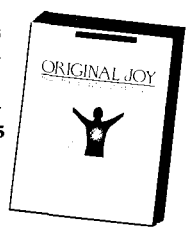

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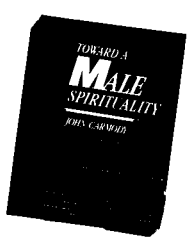

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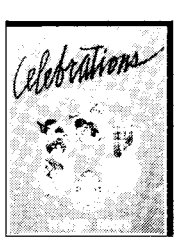

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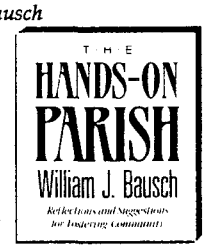

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not without its flaws. It ignores the Kennedy administration's substantial contribution to the persistent crisis atmosphere of the 1960s. But, along with the work of other younger scholars like John Lewis Gaddis, it does draw attention to both the fundamental postwar conflicts of interest between the United States and the Soviet Union and the powerful stake both countries have had in avoiding a military confrontation.

Nuclear weapons were only modestly relevant in determining either the contours or the progress of the Cold War. START talks, and their various progeny, like the SALT agreements before them, are similarly of limited relevance, except as practice exercises in developing normal diplomatic relations. Nuclear weapons or not, the Cold War will persist or be resolved as the factors that gave rise to it are addressed.

The reason for hope in the present era is not because we are on the threshold of new arms agreements, but because the Communist nations are showing signs of adopting some of the values and aspirations of the liberal democracies. When that happens, and the huge military establishments come to seem unnecessary, even somewhat silly, they will gradually melt away by themselves. □

THE BATTLE OF LONG KESH

TEN MEN DEAD
The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike
David Beresford
Atlantic Monthly Press, $18.95, 334 pp.

Joe Wakelee-Lynch

"I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world. May God have mercy on my soul." That was the vision and prayer of Bobby Sands, an Irish Republican Army prisoner, when he began his hunger strike to the death in Belfast's Long Kesh prison in March 1981. He crossed that mortal threshold sixty-six days later. And nine other IRA members—Hughes, McCreesh, O'Hara, Lynch, McDonnell, Hurson, Doherty, McElwee, and Devine—soon followed. David Beresford's *Ten Men Dead* chronicles this war-within-a-war: the battle of wills between the IRA and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

The target of the Long Kesh hunger strike was the 1975 British withdrawal of special inmate status for IRA political prisoners. London had declared that IRA prisoners were no different from other criminals and that bombings and assassinations were no different from larceny, theft, or assault. Britain was trying both to delegitimize the resistance of the IRA and to erode its support. It was a war of symbols as well as guns and gelignite.

At first the prisoners resisted with the "blanket protest": they refused to wear the prison garb of criminals, covering their bodies with only the blankets in their cells. Then the protest escalated to the "dirty protest": prisoners refused to clean out their chamber pots, pouring their urine under the cell doors, and slopping their excrement across the walls. But by 1981 the IRA prisoners convinced the IRA command that only the ultimate prison protest, the hunger strike, could force the British to reinstate political prisoner status.

Irish history is replete with legendary examples of the hunger strike. Hunger strikes are known to have taken place according to ancient codes of justice up to the seventeenth century. "Fasting on" one's offender was conducted by sitting on a person's doorstep, refusing to eat, and shaming him or her into addressing one's grievance. But the hunger strike held a particular and hallowed place specifically in Republican history. It was Terence MacSwiney, an important IRA leader of the 1920s who died after a seventy-four-day fast, who prophetically uttered what is today an IRA credo: "It is not those who can inflict the most, but those that can suffer the most who will conquer." And it was fasting that had been a factor in Britain's 1972 decision to grant special status to IRA prisoners in the first place.

MacSwiney's insight into the power of suffering as a means of effecting political change is shared by many reformers and revolutionaries of the twentieth century. The willingness to suffer for a cause was the core of Gandhi's message and King's nonviolence. Third-world revolutionaries in various parts of the globe have calculated that the ability to withstand the greater suffering and losses would give them the margin of victory in wars of national liberation.

When the prisoners in Long Kesh prison began their strike, they counted on the power of the deed. Their rationale was simple. By fasting, and perhaps dying, they would dramatize their conditions and bring public consciousness to bear on their status as political prisoners. They would shame Maggie Thatcher before the eyes of the world and, in so doing, bring worldwide scrutiny to the broader political issues of the fate of Ulster's six counties and the Irish struggle.

But the moral clarity reckoned on by the fasters was clouded by their use of fasting as a weapon in a political-military campaign. In the eyes of many observers, the IRA's appropriating Gandhian tactics counted for little since the strikers had planned and carried out acts of ruthless and unrepented violence. To these observers, the fasts were hardly nonviolent and the deaths of the prisoners were not simply the responsibility of the Thatcher government.

Beresford doesn't engage in the debate over the ethics of the hunger strike but paints the picture of a war waged even from the prison cells. By chronicling the "battle of Long Kesh," he nonetheless answers the questions by inference: the IRA was waging a war; the hunger strike of 1981 was no more and no less than a weapon in the battle; to measure the strike against a strict Gandhian standard is to compare apples with oranges.

Four months into the hunger strike, Brendan McFarlane, the IRA commander inside Long Kesh, wrote in the weary, but determined voice of a battle commander:

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We took a decision and committed ourselves to hunger-strike action. Our losses have been heavy—that I realize only too well. Yet I feel the part we have played in forwarding the liberation struggle has been great....[W]e are fighting a war and by choice we have placed ourselves in the front line. I still feel we should maintain this position and fight on in current fashion. It is we who are on top of the situation and we who are the stronger. Therefore we maintain.

Whether the strike was successful continues to be a matter of debate. Thatcher refused to give in, and the IRA lost ten men of iron determination. But some say the strike brought the issue of Northern Ireland into a harsh and revealing light. And they say the lonely journey of the ten boosted IRA recruitment to this day.

Beresford puts in human terms the conduct of an often frightful and inhumane struggle. He makes the incomprehensible comprehensible; that is, he makes understandable how ten men could face their own deaths, brought on by voluntary fasting, even while watching their comrades waste and wither away. □

REVIEWERS

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McLUHAN & HIS MESSAGE

MARSHALL McLUHAN
The Medium and the Messenger
Philip Marchand
Ticknor & Fields, $19.95, 320 pp.

LETTERS OF MARSHALL McLUHAN
Edited by Matie Molinaro, Corinne McLuhan, William Toye
Oxford University Press, $30, 562 pp.

LAWS OF MEDIA
The New Science
Marshall and Eric McLuhan
University of Toronto Press, $27.50, 252 pp.

Paul Connolly

Philip Marchand knows Marshall McLuhan well; he was his student in the sixties, the decade in which McLuhan wrote *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), and he has examined thousands of items in the National Archives of Canada. But Marchand doesn't entirely believe in McLuhan and, doubting his genius, he misses it. Anyone who reads McLuhan must decide: Genius or quack? "What If He Is Right?" asked Tom Wolfe in an early, admiring essay. McLuhan lived on the edge of High Tech, and each new reader decides whether he falls.

Marchand's reading of McLuhan's first forty years (1911-51) is sympathetic. McLuhan was born in Edmonton, raised in Winnipeg, educated in Manitoba; the western prairies "provided him with a natural 'counterenvironment' to the great centers of civilization." So did Cambridge, where McLuhan met the New Critics and wrote a doctoral dissertation on Thomas Nash. So did the Catholic church, to which McLuhan converted in 1937, influenced by G. K. Chesterton. McLuhan taught at Wisconsin, then St. Louis University, and moved to St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto in 1946, remaining (except for a year at Fordham) until his death in 1980.

Marchand describes McLuhan's mother as "a difficult parent, spreading unhappiness about her like an aerosol," and suggests that because of her McLuhan held "outdated" views of women all his life. He also describes McLuhan as a difficult husband; an invisible, workaholic father; an arch-Catholic who "believed that hell existed, and...was rather puzzled that the church did not play this supernatural trump card...more often."

In 1967 a large, benign tumor was removed from McLuhan's head, "leaving his senses...hypersensitive." According to Marchand, from this point on McLuhan is increasingly eccentric, exploitative, incoherent, conservative. He starts projects he quickly abandons; massages money from the media he mastered; fabricates his own genius. It is not a nice picture. Nor did I find Marchand's analysis of these later years convincing.

While *The Medium Is the Message* sold a million copies, most of McLuhan's other books baffle readers. McLuhan himself said: "Clear prose indicates an absence of thought." His letters, however, are clear, alive with the free play of his mind.

McLuhan's widow selected 1,500 letters (from 800,000 pieces of paper) for her volume, making choices not only for biographical reasons but, as importantly, "for...his ideas." Co-editor William Toye's footnotes and introductions to McLuhan's life add excellent indirect lighting.

These letters are always cerebral, rarely intimate. In the first thirty-five years the student writes home, mainly to his mother, to test out ideas, relate news, seek money. There are some courtship letters; some early letters to Wyndham Lewis, Walter Ong, Ezra Pound; flashes of wit. But there is little before *The Mechanical Bride* (1951) to assure that McLuhan would become more than another academic prima donna.

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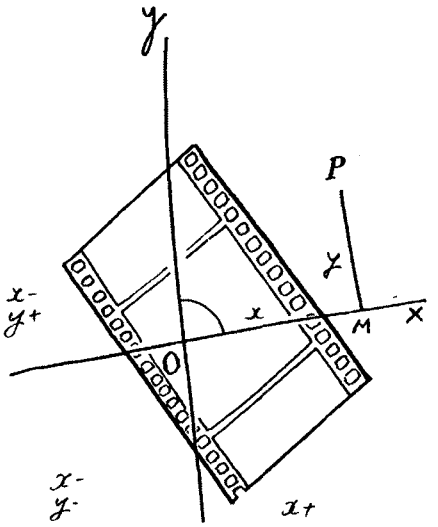
In the final thirty years, however, McLuhan's genius erupts. "I am an intellectual thug," he writes Pound in 1951, "who has been slowly accumulating a private arsenal with every intention of using it. In a mindless age every insight takes on the character of a lethal weapon." His central insight was that the printing press created a "literal," linear, uniform mind and an individualistic and nationalistic society. Electronic media, by extending the senses, create a "global village." "When the globe becomes a single electronic computer, with all its languages and cultures recorded on the single tribal drum," he explained to sociologist David Riesman, "the fixed point of view of print culture becomes irrelevant and impossible." One thinks and writes in mosaics, galaxies, ideograms that involve readers in "a perpetual act of participation and completion."

"What if he's right?" is ultimately the wrong response to Marshall McLuhan. His genius was for asking questions, not finding sufficient answers. McLuhan considered himself an empirical scientist, not a dialectician; a satirist, not a moralist; a man of percepts, not viewpoints; "I don't believe in *shoulding* on people." His peculiar approach to all things modern, he rightly observed, was "to enter via the *ground* [of media] rather than the *figure* [of content]."

McLuhan wrote to scholars such as Eric Havelock, Margaret Mead, Hugh Kenner, and Barbara Ward, but also to Saul Steinberg, Hubert Humphrey, Pierre Trudeau, Ann Landers, Jack Paar, John Cage, Jimmy Carter, Rollo May, Duke Ellington, Clare Boothe Luce, Woody Allen, and King Carl Gustav of Sweden. There are some puffs among them, but more often the letters are heavy cream, best served with other reading. McLuhan himself read incessantly (as many as thirty-five books per week), and his readers soon experience the "learning by immersion" he loved.

Several letters McLuhan wrote in 1974 allude to his work in progress, now published as *The Laws of Media*. This book started, explains Eric McLuhan—a professor of communications who completed



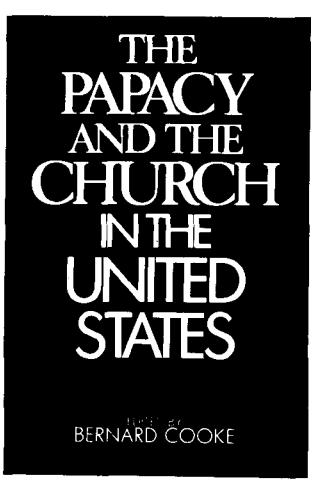
the work begun with his father—as a revision of *Understanding Media* that would provide a more systematic, "scientific" understanding of both media and McLuhan.

What follows, is fundamental McLuhan—with radical novelties. First, principles are organized into "A New Science"; a full mosaic is unveiled. Second, the four "dazzlingly simple" laws are presented as "tetrads," as a heuristic for rethinking any human object or idea: (1) "every technology extends or amplifies some organ or faculty of the user"; (2) "because there is equilibrium in sensibility, when one area of experience is heightened or intensified, another is diminished or numbed"; (3) "every form, pushed to the limit of its potential, reverses its characteristics"; (4) "the content of any medium is an older medium."

In fact, one-third of this book is tetrads: verbal icons, each composed of four words or phrases expressive of the four laws.

Marshall McLuhan wanted to break the bondage not only of print but also of dialectical thinking. The McLuhans' "new science" is actually a new rhetoric that substitutes situatedness for viewpoint. A logical mind may despair of this book's analogical reasoning, but it is full of open space that invites thought. And the caveat it quotes from Bacon is worth heeding: "examine the thing thoroughly;...make some little trial...of the way which I describe;...correct by seasonable patience...deep-rooted habits of...mind." □

The Papacy and the Church in the United States



This collection, edited by Bernard Cooke, is the first serious study of the history and theology of the papacy from a uniquely American point of view. Its conclusions are controversial. The essays show that there has been no consistent pattern or "tradition" over the centuries for Rome's dealing with its bishops. Therefore, the book suggests, current difficulties between Rome and the U.S. bishops may be a suppression of American Catholicism. Causing even further problems is the "enactment" of Vatican II principles which recognize that the presence of the Spirit flows from all people, not merely the hierarchy. Paper $10.95

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Theology, history, & transitions

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Van Beeck's volume is the first of a projected trilogy that intends to provide a systematic account of Roman Catholic theology. Anyone who attempts to "keep up" with theological writing these days knows what a daunting task faces such a systematician. Van Beeck accepts the challenge by noting early on that if such and such an article or book is not in his notes, chances are he has not read it. What he has read in depth is the Bible, the classic sources of the theological tradition, the major philosophical writers both ancient and modern, and the more significant modern voices of the theological tradition that runs from Schleiermacher down to the giants of this century: Tillich, Barth, Rahner, et al.

This work demands an exposition and critique far more detailed than I can give in these notes, but let me at least say what I like about it (and I like it very much). First, it is a theological work and not a book about theology. Van Beeck stands within the community of believers with

God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology, *by Frans Josef van Beeck, S.J., Harper & Row, $27.95, 338 pp.*

the dual intention of accounting for that community's belief and a systematic reflection on it. Second, he begins his theological reflections with the unassailable observation that the Christian community was a worshipping community that sought to encounter God through the person of the resurrected Christ. Thus, he links theology with worship and spirituality in a way not frequently found in contemporary theological writing. Third, he makes a cogent and nonpolemical case for beginning theology with an account of the believing community first and not the human need for religion. He thus reverses Rahner's strategy of beginning with the transcendental and then giving account of the categorical. Fourth, this work is conservative and radical: conservative in that it shows a profound respect for the Great Tradition and radical in the sense that it is never distracted by the accidental or epiphenomenal. Van Beeck has patience with neither the nostalgia of the right nor the utopianism of the left. My suspicion is that he will take a good deal of criticism for the general framework within which he has chosen to work and the "conservative" yield that derives from his labors, but, be that as it may, this is an impressive work that is learned, passionate, and catholic. I look forward to the next volumes.

Ayo's book is less ambitious than Van Beeck's but it is in a great theological tradition that goes back at least as far as Cyril of Jerusalem's fourth-century catechetical lectures, i.e., an extended commentary on the creed. Ayo's book is welcome because he sums up the history of the development of creeds in Christianity and, as appendices, lists all books in English on the creed written in modern times and provides some versions of the creed in the original languages and in translations. The body of the book consists of a series of theological expositions of the verses of the Apostles' Creed which are very well done. Ayo wishes to reach a broad audience so his work is not forbiddingly technical. Along with Berard Mathaler's recent *The Creed* (1987) this work makes a good choice for those desiring a foundational survey of the historic Christian faith. One only wishes that it will soon get into paperback so that it might find wider use in the classroom and as background reading for an assessment of the drafts for the universal catechism which is to appear this fall from Rome.

Creed as Symbol, *by Nicholas Ayo, C.S.C., University of Notre Dame Press, $19.95, 196 pp.*

The notion of *inculturation* has been a much discussed one since the time of the Second Vatican Council. If Karl Rahner is correct in his judgment that the council marked the end of the European church and the emergence of the world church (*Weltkirche*) then the issue of how the Gospel lives in a fashion that does not bear with it the baggage of Europe becomes a very important one. As Shorter writes in this book, there is a good deal of resentment in the African church that the new code of canon law is made as a universal law when its foundations are preeminently Western and Roman. That particular resentment may stand as a shorthand example of what a theory of inculturation must take into account.

Toward a Theology of Inculturation, *by Aylward Shorter, Orbis, $16.95, 291 pp.*

There are some very profound questions that circle around the issue of inculturation. One need only read Shorter's work (he is English but with many years of African experience) to see that inculturation cannot be fobbed off with a few cosmetic changes to the liturgy. There are issues that touch on social and personal morality, the mores of cultures, and extremely difficult questions that are foundational in character. How, for example, does one balance the authentic rights of the local church against the claims of the Great Church? What would christologies look like separated from the classical formulations of the creeds? Shorter sur-

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veys these problems and also provides us with a brief history of missionary adaptation/inculturation from the patristic period down to the present. His book is too schematic to deal with all questions in detail but one can get a sense of the whole by a careful reading of this work. I also liked it because he is conversant with the theological labors of Africans and, as with most Westerners, that is an area where I am in need of instruction. Books such as this one help us overcome an almost inevitable parochialism in our reading and, at least to that extent, they are most welcome.

Cashdollar, by contrast, is a historian and his book is about theology or, more precisely, how the thought of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) influenced the Anglophone theologians of the last century. They received his positivist philosophy, with its idea of intellectual progress and its inexorable march away from theology and metaphysics, with a mixture of horror and fascination. Comte's philosophy may seem like thin gruel today but it was heady stuff in a century in which religious thought either anchored itself in traditional authority (e.g., The Oxford Movement) or moved to positions of accommodation with the rise of post-Enlightenment critical thought (e.g., the Broad Church Movement, the Unitarians, the Transcendentalists). Comte himself imagined a vastly complicated church of general humanity complete with ritual, authority figures, a secular calendar of saints, etc. It was, as Thomas Huxley unsentimentally sniffed, Roman Catholicism without the Christianity.

The Transformation of Theology, 1830-1890: Positivism and Protestant Thought in Britain and America, *by Charles D. Cashdollar, Princeton, $35, 489 pp.*

Nonscholars may become a bit fainthearted with Cashdollar's meticulous chronicle of theological wrestlings now consigned to the backshelves of libraries, but I must confess that his book kept me engaged, not so much because of any burning interest in Comte but because familiar people kept swimming into his story: George Eliot and John Henry Newman; John Stuart Mill and Orestes Brownson; Charles Darwin and Leslie Stephen. From a somewhat narrow initial focus Cashdollar manages to rehearse for us once again many of the more fascinating religious struggles of the last century. It was, after all, the era of Darwinism, the rise of the higher criticism in biblical studies, the emergence of the Social Gospel, and the struggles of the Roman Catholic church with the fact of modernity. All of these movements have their place in this exemplary piece of intellectual history. Although his work is more narrowly focused, I found it a nice follow-up to the much admired study of Michael Buckley (*At the Origins of Modern Atheism,* Yale) which ends where Cashdollar's work begins: early in the nineteenth century.

We have been fairly inundated with theological works from liberation theologians in the past two decades. Almost all of these writers are systematic theologians with a strong interest in biblical studies. Their forte is the application of theological reflection to the contemporary situation. The past interests them less for its own sake than for the light it sheds on today.

Hoornaert, by contrast, is an ecclesiastical historian living in Latin America who attempts, in this work, to look at church history in its formative centuries, through the liberationist perspective. He distances himself from those historians whose lineage traces back to Eusebius of Caesarea's institutional concerns; he opts instead for a more prophetic, underclass consideration of history. This is hardly a new approach as readers of "popular" history know well. Indeed, Hoornaert builds on the work of a number of scholars who have done very much the same thing. Still, his history is *engaged*, which is to say, sure in its belief that we have lost some authentic perspectives on the past because of ideological mystification. Like other historians writing today he wants to get away from the "high" view of history as a history of elite culture to a grittier view of things.

The Memory of the Christian People, *by Eduardo Hoornaert, Orbis, $26.95, 304 pp.*

To say that his approach is not original is not to say that it is without interest. Indeed, the book is a quite interesting corrective for those nurtured only on church history "from above." Hoornaert is interested in values as seen in lives rather than in values as formulated in canons. Why did Christians refuse military service? Why were they criticized for accepting the rabble into their communities? Why did they reject abortion and the exposure of infants? What was their objection to the games of the Roman arena? How did they come to equate the severity of male adultery and female adultery? And so on. There is some tendentious special pleading in this work and the translator did not serve us well in the notes and bibliography (Why are a Portuguese and French source for Simone Weil cited but no English reference? Why no mention of the English translation of some of the primary texts? That sort of thing). But I found this liberationist reading of early church history a fresh new way of looking at things even when many pages cried out for counterargument or a more nuanced reading.

Osborne's study is both historical and theological. He is concerned with the evolution of the Catholic priesthood out of the New Testament church. It is a complicated issue since the role of the priest in Catholic Christianity developed in tandem with the evolution of other ministries (preeminently the office of the *episkopos*) both as an office and in terms of its functional role in the church. Furthermore, priesthood cannot be studied apart from the equally complicated issue of the sacrament of orders. Finally, the whole question of the priesthood is a central issue both in ecumenical discussions and internally, as we watch the not-so-slow dissolution of the kind of priestly culture that developed in the West after

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the Council of Trent.

This is a very helpful work. It is irenic in tone; sensitive to the complications of history; in command of the sources; and written in a straightforward, expository style. At the end of each chapter, Osborne, always the pedagogue, summarizes the main line of the argument in a series of brief statements. His story runs from the New Testament through the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods with final chapters on the recent developments in both the Catholic church and the bilateral ecumenical discussions. At a few places he cites scholars in French or German without translations in the text which will irritate nonprofessionals but, by and large, this is a most readable work. Not as comprehensive as Bernard Cooke's massive *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (1976), Osborne's book is, nonetheless, a fine historico-theological study of the priesthood and, as such, should find a welcome readership among students of sacramental theology as well as ecclesiology because of the ramifications of his conclusions in the structures of the church and the ecumenical consequences of those conclusions. □

Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church, *by Kenan Osborne, O.F.M., Paulist, $14.95, 388 pp.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 514)

next Sunday morning. Churches are swept clean and everything is polished. Flowers are put around sanctuaries. The clergy and chief laity are standing in their best clothes on the church steps in eager expectation of the arrival of their Lord. But when Jesus does come, he walks right on past the churches and heads for the streets of the ghetto where he feels at home.

REV. MICHAEL BECKER

Apologia: Opus Dei

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In his article on "Catholic Fundamentalism" (*Commonweal*, January 27), Father John A. Coleman, S.J., gave prominent place to *Opus Dei*. Unfortunately, his portrayal of this institution of the church reflects the position of a few writers who have failed to understand what *Opus Dei* really is, and accordingly have consistently misrepresented it. *Opus Dei* can neither be characterized as "integralist," nor can it be labeled "fundamentalist."

Opus Dei is a personal prelature of the church and is improperly described as a tightly knit organization with a temporal agenda—of any kind. It devotes itself fully and exclusively to cooperating in a specific way in the carrying out of the basic mission of the church, as it has from its beginnings: its purposes are purely spiritual and apostolic. It adheres to and teaches the Catholic faith in its entirety, and hence is sensitive to the place of Scripture and the whole tradition of Catholic teaching that makes up the magisterium. In accordance with the nature of personal prelatures, *Opus Dei* is a universal apostolate inserted into the local dioceses and has a specific mission to foster among lay Catholics of every walk of life the pursuit of holiness and of carrying out a Christian apostolate in and through their ordinary work in the world. This includes fostering unity with the local bishop and charity with all. Members pray daily for the unity of the apostolate and strive to live accordingly.

Those writers who have consistently misrepresented *Opus Dei* have not wrestled sufficiently with what a true spirituality for ordinary lay people might involve. Instead they tend to think of *Opus Dei* according to their own models of the way lay people ought to work for Christ and church in the world.

Opus Dei answers to the need for a spirituality by which ordinary lay men and women can aspire to the fullness of charity in their ordinary lives. Though founded a full generation before Vatican II, *Opus Dei* welcomed the council's repeated statements that confirm its own teaching—that the laity have as "their special vocation. . .to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them to God's will" (*Constitution on the Church*, 31). *Opus Dei* has never seen itself as providing *the* way, but only

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a way. It respects and admires all ways and all other institutions in the church, even as it rejoices that the church, in its numerous approvals of *Opus Dei* both before and after Vatican II, has recognized and confirmed *Opus Dei* and its spirituality as authentically lay and secular and as one to which those who have the vocation may commit themselves with confidence. Members of *Opus Dei*—men and women, married and single—dedicate themselves fully to this quest while yet remaining ordinary faithful of their dioceses and ordinary citizens.

It is on the implications of this that those who misrepresent *Opus Dei* seem to run aground. Aware that members live a dedication that is full, they seem to have difficulty in grasping that such a dedication can—indeed, must—be compatible with all the rights and duties of the lay state. These critics seem to imagine that the obedience members live is modeled on that of the religious, whose life is subject to a rule and at the dispositions of the superiors. They will acknowledge that the lay person need not be a "second-class citizen" in the church, but they have not considered that the heights of sanctity must be pursuable, not according to the kind of "religious obedience" that those in the religious orders and congregations follow, but according to a spiritual obedience proper to the laity—that is, one that leaves them free in all temporal affairs. Hence they wrongly conclude that members of *Opus Dei* must be "controlled" in a way that would not be proper for the lay person.

Opus Dei, as it has so often repeated, is devoted simply to its purely spiritual and apostolic mission, and leaves its members completely free—with the same freedom enjoyed by all lay people—to do as they please in all areas of the secular sphere, even as they strive to do so in accordance with a well-formed Christian conscience. They form their own opinions and make their own decisions in all aspects of their lives—whether professional, political, economic, familial, or social—on their own responsibility without any "directives" or impositions from *Opus Dei* in such matters, exactly as all Catholic lay faithful do.

People of *Opus Dei* do not constitute an "organization"—they are simply lay faithful of the prelature with regard to their dedication, even as they continue as faithful of their dioceses. *Opus Dei* has no political, social, or ideological "agenda" that mixes religion and secular issues. Despite *Opus Dei*'s denials, which its critics often acknowledge and then simply ignore, and despite their own vain efforts to find such an "agenda" (hence they conclude that it must be "secret"), they find ways to characterize *Opus Dei* according to their own way of thinking.

We have seen these vain efforts over the years, beginning in the late fifties, when some members of *Opus Dei*, using their own freedom on their own responsibility, took positions in Franco's cabinet. *Opus Dei* was immediately labeled "political," a "Franco-supporter" and of course, in the international community, "Spanish." Because the focus was predominately political, there was little interest in finding out what *Opus Dei* really is, and little interest in reporting what might put the lie to such identifications.

When Calvo Serer, for example, a member who certainly had a politics of his own, was hounded into exile by the Franco regime and his opposition newspaper blown up, none of these writers could take notice; they preferred to focus on his ideas of "hispanidad" and that he was a monarchist, in order to sustain their appraisal that *Opus Dei* was somehow "reactionary." They could not notice that he returned to Spain, after lecturing at Yale and other U.S. universities, to play a significant underground role there in the democratic junta that prepared the way for Spain's present constitutional monarchy. It is ironic that *Opus Dei*, with its clear emphasis on the Catholic distinction between spiritual and temporal realities (so intrinsic to its very nature), in fact experienced its toughest times in Spain, where the opposite tradition has continued strong.

Little heed was paid at the time to *Opus Dei*'s *Catholic* position and its insistence that it was not born to solve Spain's or any other nation's particular political or social problems—that *Opus Dei* was universal from the start. With the passing of time, the mistaken effort to characterize *Opus Dei* on the basis of the temporal activity of this or that member has begotten all sorts of labels and undergone a series of modifications, as these critics discover that no such generalizations will work. We have seen it go from "fascist" to the more vague "protofascist" to the more general "right-wing" and "conservative" and more recently to "middle-class" (of course in a pejorative sense)—all mistaken. We have seen it go from "political" to "intellectual" to "elitist" and "made up of the rich." We have seen businesses and banks where members work become identified as *Opus Dei* enterprises, and these more recently have been ominously coupled with corporations and foundations set up to operate apostolic and social works (invariably penurious) as constituting an imaginary financial network to advance a putative "agenda." The latest effort in this line—as if to sum all of this up—has been to try to call it "fundamentalist." All of this suffers from the same mistaken effort to characterize *Opus Dei* according to a preconceived demand that it "must" have an ideological focus. The truth is much simpler. *Opus Dei* accepts and teaches what the church teaches in its entirety and, at the same time, helps people live a life of

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prayer in the midst of the world and carry out an apostolate of their own, both individually and with others—members or not—who wish to be involved with their good efforts.

Apart from the ever-broadening and ever-increasing meaninglessness of the ideological characterizations mentioned above, they have invariably been made by ignoring the vast numbers of *Opus Dei* members who simply do not fit—whether it was the anti-Franco Spaniard or the housewife in Peoria who has no truck with dictators, or the thousands of members who are not bank directors, or the ordinary member who never even thought of going to an Ivy League college. Sometimes these critics have been led to make much of normal and even innocent "facts" to their own purposes (most bankers are probably "conservative"; and yet it is unfair to assume that simply being a banker, especially if he is in *Opus Dei*, automatically means he "must" be stereotypically "conservative"). Sometimes they have not been past stretching or even inventing "facts" to make their case.

But above all, they have missed two basic points about *Opus Dei*; that in fact it is for any and all—that is "catholic" in a very real way; and that it is Catholic in the more fundamental sense—that it is established in the church and as part of the church with a mission that is one with the church's mission. They have missed the good news that the church in our times has produced and authoritatively confirmed this way for those lay faithful who wish to enter fully into the call implicit in their baptism, a call heard again resoundingly in Vatican II: "Not only are [the laity] to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind" (*The Church in the Modern World*, 43).

WILLIAM A. SCHMITT
Director of Communications
Prelature of *Opus Dei*

The author replies:

William Schmitt will recognize that my labeling of *Opus Dei* as neo-integralist was neither the first nor the least irenic indictment of the movement. The noted sociologist, Andrew Greeley, for example, has said of *Opus Dei* that it is a "devious, antidemocratic, reactionary, semifacist institution, desperately hungry for absolute power in the church. It ought to be forced either to come out into the open or be suppressed" (*National Catholic Reporter*, January 23, 1981). Penny Lernoux in her recent book, *People of God* (Viking, 1989) calls the movement "a Catholic fundamentalist dictatorship." Lernoux presents richer evidence than I could in my article of *Opus Dei*'s temporal agenda (i.e., the *Opus* founder, Msgr. Escriva's militant anticommunism and religious reinforcement of social hierarchies based on class, his male-centered hierarchy).

Schmitt alleges that *Opus* respects "all the rights and duties of the lay state." Yet *Opus* practices severe censorship over books, magazines, and films seen by members. Moreover, authorities at Princeton University recently demanded the removal of an *Opus*-related chaplain since he used the spiritual-direction relation to determine which university courses students could and could not take. A characteristic complaint of former *Opus* members is that the confessional (*Opus* members are forbidden confession to non-*Opus* priests) and the regular "heart-to-heart" spiritual confidences with priest directors involve detailed supervision of their ordinary lives. Dr. John Roche, an Oxford University scientist and former member, recounts the case of a young woman in London, a recent recruit to *Opus*. She was sent a letter offering her a scholarship, but she did not receive it because it was concealed by *Opus Dei*, which had other plans for her future. This does not look to me like Schmitt's vaunted Vatican II lay autonomy.

Secrecy lies at the crux of complaints about *Opus Dei*. It is ruled by a secret constitution, many of whose articles are unknown to ordinary members (as opposed to the elite "Numeraries" or insiders), let alone to outsiders. Allegations by former members allege cases of concealment of identity by *Opus Dei* recruiters. Indeed, in 1981 England's Cardinal Basil Hume was forced to issue a directive forbidding the movement to recruit anyone under eighteen without the consent of his or her parents. *Opus* members complain that it is unfair to tar the prelature as such for the financial or political scandals of its members. But as Lernoux notes, "Detailed supervision of members' lives makes it difficult for *Opus* to distance itself from scandals in which its followers may be involved."

An unfriendly critic might raise an eyebrow about any one group in the church claiming actually to "adhere to and teach the Catholic faith in its entirety." So great and rich is the Catholic church that no one group could lay such a claim. The danger in such claims (as opposed to an aspiration toward full fidelity) is to see one movement as coextensive with the real church, typical of integralist groups. I find it hard to believe that the recurring doubts about *Opus Dei* (even among many bishops) are simply due to misunderstanding. At any rate, I see no cogent reason to retract my label of *Opus Dei* as neo-integralist. If *Opus* feels it is consistently misunderstood they might heed Lernoux's words: "Secret groups inevitably give the impression that they have something to hide; they also encourage rumors and conspiracy theories."

JOHN A. COLEMAN, S.J.

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IS RELIGION JUST FOR THE IGNORANT?

In many intellectual circles the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dimwitted and unlettered. Yet, recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, and amid inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious renaissance entail embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or superpatriotism. Nor does it imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, or human dignity. Rather, there's an awareness that, as Jean Bethke Elshtain put it, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political choices which are far more durable than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

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